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A YEAR

BY

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ON

TWO HUNDRED POUNDS A YEAR

BY

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EDITRESS OF THE "LADIES' TREASURY"

AUTHOR OF

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P R E F A C E.

Too frequently light-hearted happy young wives are suddenly sobered into earnest thoughtfulness, or into peevish discontent, according to their temperament—within, perhaps, the first year of their wifehood—simply from not knowing the value of money before they have taken the irrevocable step which is to be the bane or the happiness of their lives. Two hundred pounds a year seem ample funds wherewith to commence housekeeping—so think the inexperienced, and thus thinking they insensibly permit small sums to run away with the greater part of their income; and how little can be spared for other than bare necessities the table of expenditure given at p. 12 will show. Nevertheless, if a young wife of middle class be handy with her needle, and has had experience under her parents' roof, she will find two hundred pounds per annum a sum all-sufficient to steer her matrimonial craft safely over shoals and breakers, provided always that love sits at the helm. Not passion, not caprice, least of all indifference, for the rose of summer could as soon bloom in the Arctic zone, as love dwell where the cold heart is reflected in the chilling aspect or careless action.

To be able to sing, to play, to dance, or paint is not

actually needed in order to live comfortably, but all are very desirable acquirements, and a home where these accomplishments can be made subservient to social intercourse is far more charming, and more variedly interesting, than where a woman is a mere household drudge. And for this reason only, if for no other, a girl should devote some portion of her time to acquire or to retain them. But, to fit herself to become a happy wife and mother, she must not be ignorant of any household duty—any domestic art.

To know how to make and mend clothes, to wash, to bake, to cook—economically and well—to clean and scour, should not be deemed by her unimportant matters; on the contrary, this knowledge is the oil by which the domestic machinery effectively and noiselessly revolves in its daily work. It is true she may never actually perform the work herself, but in the present day she must certainly teach her servant, or there will be no comfort in her house.

“The eye of a mistress will do more work than both her hands—”

“She looketh well to the way of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”

The false pride which leads captive many a young girl or wife, whose heart would leap to do that which is right but for an imaginary “Mrs. Grundy” who rules over most of us, more or less, should be cast aside as low and vulgar. The mistress with a moderate income who thinks it beneath her to do any household work is but imitating a very low class of servants who, when asked to clean knives or boots, or to wash, very complacently replies, “I’ve allays been ’spectable, and had no call to do sich things,” and thereupon point-blank refuses to undertake a situation where such work has to be done. It is not worth while for any mistress

to copy her maid-of-all-work (delusive term!) and think it is derogatory to her dignity to perform any needful duty.

It is said that the race of good servants has died out, leaving no successors; and why is this? it may be asked. Because their teachers have died with them. Untaught young mistresses are incapable of teaching.

The consequences of this lamentable ignorance of household matters are to be greatly deplored, for while girls are so thriftless and manifestly so unfitted for managing a house young men cannot marry, it must not be said, "will not;" it is impossible with the luxurious and idle habits which have been cherished by both sexes of the middle class that they can do so.

The misery too often attendant upon the married state, where the husband is not a selfish man, is frequently induced by the wife's incompetent management and the irritability of both in consequence, whence ill-health is sure to follow. By these two circumstances alone a sickly race is perpetuated, and the lives of both husbands and wives soured for all happy purposes. These are not God's dispensations; they are self-created. But, should a girl choose a selfish husband, then her fate is to be pitied, for none can tell the life-long misery which such a union entails.

In domestic, as in other matters, much valuable help may be derived from reliable and practical works of information, but to the theory thence obtained must be carried observation and effort. Each household, with its more or less and very opposite requirements, needs a different ordering, but the great principles for ruling, directing, and acting must ever remain fixed. These have been insisted on as being vitally important in this little work—"HOW I MANAGED MY HOUSE ON TWO HUNDRED POUNDS A YEAR."

This sum is large by comparison with thousands of in-

comes, which are much less. But, to make the most of any working man's or clerk's income, a girl, if she be the wife of either, must be educated to cook, wash, make, and mend, if she would have peace, comfort, and respectability; also, she must have other and more refined accomplishments if she would make her home socially pleasant, or educate her children; which she must do, or let them run wild into every sin to which a vacant mind can tempt them, thus inviting upon her own head every condemnation.

Daughters! diligently and zealously learn and practise every domestic duty and every feminine accomplishment; so will lovers eagerly seek you without fortune or other adventitious circumstances, and no longer will they say, "We cannot marry; our income will not suffice."

Wives! if you would retain your husbands' love with a deeper affection than when in its youthful freshness, cultivate every winning charm of mind and manner—every grace of proper attire, but let your household management be such as shall ensure comfort, pleasure, and recreation, and your own knowledge of simple cookery that which shall not only tempt the appetite, but as much as possible ensure health, by banishing indigestion and all the evils which arise from it.

LONDON, *November*, 1864.

From the date of the First Edition of this little Work, Forty-seven Thousand copies have been called for. The authoress is much gratified by the favourable reception of her efforts.

LONDON, *February*, 1866.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

| | |
|---|---|
| ILL-MANAGEMENT—DEBT—TABLE OF EXPENDITURE—TRUSTING TO A GIRL'S HELP; DEATH IN CONSEQUENCE . . . | 9 |
|---|---|

CHAPTER II.

| | |
|--|----|
| HOUSE-HUNTING: ITS TROUBLES—EARLY RISING—PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT—COOKERY . . . | 18 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER III.

| | |
|--|----|
| PUNCTUALITY—HOW TO KEEP A DINNER WARM—BERTHA CHAPMAN'S VISIT—HER MANAGEMENT . . . | 30 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER IV.

| | |
|---|----|
| THE SICKNESS OF BERTHA'S STEP-SON — A VISIT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—HOW TO KEEP BUTTER AND WATER COOL | 58 |
|---|----|

CHAPTER V.

| | |
|---|----|
| WASTE OF BREAD — HOW TO BE CHARITABLE WITH IT— DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING NIGGARDLY AND ECONOMISING —SKILLED SERVANTS CANNOT BE HAD—A MISTRESS MUST TEACH THEM—HOW TO WASH SMALL THINGS IN A BOWL. | 75 |
|---|----|

CHAPTER VI.

| | |
|---|----|
| HOW TO MAKE PUDDINGS—HOW TO SAVE IN MAKING THEM— TRIFLES DO NOT EXIST IN HOUSEKEEPING MANAGEMENT— A SERVANT'S ALLOWANCE—HOW TO EXPEND TWENTY- SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK—THE ORDERING OF SEWING- WORK—NO BUTTONS OFF SHIRTS—HOW TO WASH SMALL THINGS | 79 |
|---|----|

CHAPTER VII.

| | |
|--|----|
| THE ART OF DRESSING IN GOOD TASTE—ALICE'S ACCOMPLISH- MENTS—A HUSBAND AND FATHER'S DEATH—HIS INCOME DIES WITH HIM—THE VALUE OF AN INSURANCE—FUTURE EMPLOYMENT—ALICE AND EDWARD'S MARRIAGE | 86 |
|--|----|

THE CONCLUSION.

| | |
|--|----|
| WORK FOR EACH DAY IN THE WEEK, AND SOME SIMPLE DIRECTIONS FOR A FEW DAINTY DISHES OF FOOD | 91 |
|--|----|

HOW I MANAGED MY HOUSE ON TWO HUNDRED POUNDS A YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

ILL-MANAGEMENT—DEBT—TABLE OF EXPENDITURE—TRUSTING
TO A GIRL'S HELP; DEATH IN CONSEQUENCE.

It seems an odd thing, and possibly a presumptuous one, to narrate a history of the pitfalls and troubles of early married life, arising solely from having no skill in the expenditure of a limited income.

Married very young, and when I knew nothing of the cost of any article of provision, I thought my husband's income a mine of gold, quite sufficient for all needs, and to spare, and wondered very much at the end of the first year of our marriage that I could not quite make both ends meet. My husband was most indulgent, for I had no secrets from him, and, indeed, I felt it a great relief to say, "My dear, Ellen's wages are due for this quarter, and I have no money to pay her."

He looked up from some papers he had been arranging, and said, "How is this, little one? Where is all the money gone to?"

I immediately burst into a flood of tears. "Indeed, I don't know," I answered sobbingly, "I did the best I could with it."

He took me tenderly in his arms, and when my trouble had a little gone off said, "Now, tell me all about it."

"Oh!" said I, not answering his request, "why did you not look at the bills—why did you let me spend the money so fast?"

"Because, dear Milly, I thought you a perfect little house-keeper. The home I took you from was so orderly, so well managed, and your little brothers and sisters obeyed you so lovingly—what could I think, but that for all occasions you were

a little gem of 'lustre rare?' And now, wifey, tell me your troubles, that I may help you."

"Oh! I cannot pay Ellen's wages, and I owe for this dress and some other things; and I am not sure that I shall be able to pay Hardman, the butcher."

"Now, then, let us see. Ellen two pounds ten——" "Yes; and Hardman quite eight pounds." "Well, and the dress."

"Oh! it is not that only, but there are other things that come to sixteen pounds."

My husband looked grave—ay, graver than I had ever seen him; his arm relaxed in the grasp in which it held me, finally he withdrew it, and held his head between his hands. "Speak, Fred," said I, "oh! speak, and do not be angry."

"I am not angry, child; but this is sad; I did not dream of this," was his reply.

"But you will be able to pay it?" I asked. "Pay it? Oh, yes; but at what a risk! You know your father would not give his consent to our marriage without I insured my life for a thousand pounds, as he considered that, though I might become a rich man when I had fully entered into practice, yet death sometimes sadly interfered with our brilliant schemes—and he was right. Now, here is the notice from the assurance office, that my payment for the next year falls due in fifteen days; if I discharge your bills I cannot pay this without encroaching on our next year's income. It is fortunate that I have reserved the money for the rent and taxes. Dry up your eyes, little fairy, and be cheerful. I cannot bear to see you thus."

"But, oh! Fred, will you pay the bills all through the next year? I don't want to have any money."

"Darling, this must not—cannot be. It is out of my power to order the daily dinners—to look after the scraps, regulate the laundry expenditure, and control the thousand and one trifles which, however, at the end of the year make up the whole sum of two hundred pounds. So courage, little one, try the next year; we shall do, if God gives us health." And thus the matter dropped.

The end of the next year came, and a little daughter was added to our comfort. The last evening of the old year came steadily on. I will tell my husband now, thought I; he cannot be angry that I cannot pay this bill; I have spent so much for our little treasure. And so, and so, and so it came out that I now owed twenty pounds more than I could pay, notwithstanding that I had pinched here and screwed there, till sometimes my life became an

utter weariness, lighted up only by my husband's sunny smile and cheerful light-heartedness.

This time there was no fondling, no half-measures.

"We cannot pay this," said he. "What is to be done? We are not only careless, but sinful: we are dishonest. Tradesmen have trusted us on the faith of our good name. The wretch who steals bread to satisfy his hunger is not to be condemned as we are." He was silent for some time, then said, wearily, "Put the bills away, and tell me when they are called for." The next night, as he was fondling and caressing our little one, he suddenly said—

"Little wife, would you like to go to London?"

"Oh! yes, very much; but what do you mean?"

"Richard Fenton has been ill some time, and is ordered to the south of France: he wants me to take care of his practice for him—he thinks I may like a change, as everybody seems so peaceable here, and not inclined to go to law, that I may as well do some good for him, and says that he has let his house in some square until his return in the autumn; but he sends me a cheque for fifty pounds. We shall, therefore, have to find our own residence."

"But house rent will be more expensive in London than here, will it not?"

"Yes, indeed, it will be trebled, though otherwise, perhaps, the move might ultimately be of advantage; but we must come to a fixed determination not to spend more than a definite portion of our income upon each requisite. You know that here in the country we are getting a tolerable house for twenty pounds, and the taxes are merely nominal. In London we shall find but very indifferent shelter for that sum, while the taxes may there always be considered at a quarter of the rent."

"Now, Fred, will you put down exactly what we ought to spend, and we must not go beyond."

"That's it, little wife," returned my husband; "that's just the point I want to bring you to. Remember—'MUST NOT GO BEYOND.' For these two years we have spent in advance of our income, and but for this timely cheque of Fenton's we must have lost our insurance policy, and this year shall have to sell some of our furniture to pay our way."

"Sell some of our furniture? Oh, no! you do not mean that."

"How else shall we get out of debt, little woman? We cannot be so mean as to live on our tradesmen's charity, and I cannot borrow because I cannot pay. You know I have only a

life interest in my property ; and this circumstance it was which made me as anxious as your father on the subject of having my life insured. So that, situate as we now are, I do not regret moving from here."

My heart sank in dismay at the prospect before me, while my husband rallied me on my blank look. In a moment a vital strength seemed to be poured into my soul ; I never could tell from whence it came, nor have I ever forgotten it, though more than this once in my life I have experienced the same in some turning-point of my career. "Fred, let me beg of you to put down instantly all we should spend, and I will keep to it," I said, almost breathlessly, as if afraid to lose a moment. My husband smiled at my eagerness, took out his pencil, and proceeded to make his calculations while I left the room. On my return in half an hour,

"Here, Milly," said he, "is the sum and total of the whole ; but you must sign the pledge to keep within the bounds of all here set down, even before you look at the list, or there will be nothing more or less than RUIN !"

"Read it out, Fred : I shall understand it better." "First come the—

| | | | |
|--|-------|---|----|
| Rent and taxes per annum | £25 | 0 | 0 |
| Coals, candles, and living for ourselves, our little one, and servant, 27s. per week, or | 70 | 0 | 0 |
| Wages for servant—only one, mind . . | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Insurance for £1000 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Clothes for myself | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| „ wife | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| „ babe | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| For washing | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| | <hr/> | | |
| | 180 | 0 | 0 |
| For doctor's bills, unforeseen sundries, or exigencies | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| | <hr/> | | |
| | £200 | 0 | 0" |
| | <hr/> | | |

I held out my hand for the paper, and again and again I pondered over the different items, and thought the allowance for each requisite ample ; but then, how was it I had run into debt ? there was the riddle.

"What is it, Milly?" said my husband, seeing the fatal scroll had dropped on the floor, and I sat looking in the fire, as if reading my future there.

"I must think," I replied; "give me till to-morrow this time, and I will tell you what it is."

To-morrow came, and even before I rose in the morning I said, "Let us go from here, Fred; I am determined to spend no more than my allowance; but you must keep the money, and give it to me weekly, as I require it."

"So be it, darling; but only one thing I ask you to solemnly promise me—ay, as if your life depended on the breaking of your vow—NEVER TO GO IN DEBT."

"I promise," said I, as I held out both my hands to him, and in that same moment my heart went up to God, even before my eyes had left my husband's face, asking for strength to keep my resolution; and again, for the second time in my life, I felt an influence certainly not of earth.

It matters not to relate here all the misery I endured in disposing of part of our furniture, in making the necessary preparations for our departure, in taking leave of all our old friends (who, by their frequent visitings at what they termed a pleasant home, had unconsciously helped to swell our debts), and the earliest associations of my childhood; every favourite spot became trebly dear to me as the time drew near for our change of life. My parents were not made acquainted with our real reasons for quitting the neighbourhood, for, indeed, I could not bear to have my carelessness canvassed, for I felt—oh, how deeply!—that but for the trouble I myself had made this would never have happened, and I knew the vexation it would have cost my father at the bare possibility of the insurance being dropped. Truly I felt like a criminal in fear of hourly detection, so that when all the adieus were said and we were ready to start, a sense of relief overpowered me, and my spirits were raised in proportion to the freedom I felt. Arrived in London, we sought inexpensive lodgings until a house could be found. The discomfort, annoyance, and expense of this mode of living nearly drove me wild. In a fortnight our furniture was to follow. I had brought a young girl from the country with me—strong and willing, but totally inexperienced. And here was my great mistake; I intended to save from the commencement, overlooking the proverb "Penny wise and pound foolish." Consequently, instead of having a help in my difficulties, which I should have had if I had taken an older and better-qualified person, I had, in addition to the care and anxiety of my own baby, the torment

of a young giddy thing who could not be trusted, and who spent every spare moment of her time in the kitchen, gossiping upon all our ways and doings in the country. Before twelve hours had expired the landlady was fully acquainted with the genealogy of myself and husband, and in possession of information reported to her as facts which indeed existed only in the romantic brain of our so-called help.

My husband day after day spent a great portion of his time in searching for a house, and the evening brought him home weary and out of spirits.

"Milly," said he, one night, "I have traversed whole streets of dingy-looking houses, and can find nothing that will suit you at the rent we have fixed on. To-morrow I shall go a short way into the country; a walk of three miles into town and out in the evening cannot hurt me; indeed, I think I shall benefit by the change. You had better go with me to-morrow; our search may be more successful."

"But my baby, Fred; I cannot trust her with Ann, she is so giddy. You really must go alone."

"Oh, for one day surely she cannot hurt. Ask the landlady to give an eye to her."

I saw that my husband had so set his mind upon my accompanying him that I consented, though with extreme reluctance—an ominous foreboding seemed to oppress me. However, in the morning my babe looked so well and cheerful, and Ann made so many promises that she would be careful of my treasure, and attentive to her little wants, and the landlady assured me again and again that she would "take care of the dear babby as if it were her own," that I set out with something of confidence on our house-hunting expedition. Oh! the misery of that day! Many miles we must have walked, still unsuccessful in our search. Houses there were plenty, but in what appeared to me such squalid neighbourhoods—the children running in and out of the open doors munching bread and butter, building grottoes of oyster shells, screaming, shouting, and kicking; the mothers gossiping at each other's doors, caring nothing for the din, and occasionally adding to it by calling to their rebellious urchins in shriller voices—that my heart sank within me. In such a place I could not live; and not one place only, but all, seemed to be alike in their noise, dirt, and, to me, misery. I, who had been brought up in every delicate refinement—how should I live among such people? The day ended, and we strolled wearily home, but carefully observant of every seeming out-of-the-way nook that might afford us our

wished-for haven, but without success. Our rooms had a cheerful appearance as we entered : there was a clean hearth, a bright fire, our babe looked quite well as she lay quietly sleeping in her cot. The only thing I noticed was a kind of agitation in Ann that I attributed to her anxiety to have everything right on our return. My husband laughed at my fears, the result, he said, of nervousness produced by our recent removal.

"You see," he said, "nothing has gone wrong—to-morrow we must go again." The morrow came, I left my babe, who seemed as well as usual, though not very lively, as she did not care for her food, which I attributed to her interest in a new toy which we had brought her. At the close of the day we had been somewhat more successful in our search, but it was at an increase of rent. For a small house, pleasantly situate four miles from Lincoln's Inn, we were asked thirty pounds, the rates and taxes we were told would be seven pounds—perhaps a little more, call it eight—and upon the eligibility of the house we agreed to consider, and come to a decision late on the following day. Home was reached with spirits somewhat more buoyant, though seven pounds more than the sum destined for the rent and taxes was additional expense, to be met—how ? That we must think about. Our little darling was lying asleep, as before, in her cot, her face looked flushed, which I attributed to the heat of the room. There was a confused look about Ann's eyes which I could not account for.

"How has the baby been, Ann ?"

"Very well, ma'am, only a little cough."

"How did she get it ?" said I. "Did you take her out to-day ? I hope you have not disobeyed me ?"

"I haven't stirred outside the door since you went, ma'am."

"My dear, you make yourself quite ill about the child. Do give me some tea," said my husband, I thought rather pettishly. The thought was but for an instant, for how had he plodded this day, making me rest in every available spot, while he went up and down every likely-looking lane or street in search of a home ! The tea was finished and taken away, and we were entering into all the details for and against the only suitable house we had seen, when suddenly a croup-like cough came from the cot, which made us both start and rush to our still sleeping child ; again and again that cough came, when I took her up and she gasped for breath. To get his hat and rush out was but the work of an instant, and soon my husband returned with a medical man ; meantime, I had summoned both Ann and the landlady. The moment the doctor's eye fell on the former, she shrank into the darkness of the room.

My precious babe was even now in convulsions. Ay, even after the lapse of these many years does that awful scene rise up with the vividness of a present reality. For many hours the little sufferer remained in a gasping death-like state, the doctor coming at intervals through the night. In the morning, when she seemed free from pain, he took my husband out of the room and told him there was no hope—the child could not live. “And for this,” continued he, “you may thank that servant of yours. The day before yesterday I was called to attend a child labouring under spasmodic croup and whooping cough, when as I entered I saw your child in the arms of its careless nurse, who was standing over the bed watching the contortions of the sick child’s face: your infant had only the girl’s apron thrown over its head. Understanding she did not belong to the house, I told her instantly to go home and tell the parents of the child the danger it had been in. I am sorry now that I did not inquire where she lived; this sad sorrow might then, perhaps, have been prevented.”

Oh! the agony of a mother watching every life-throb of her dying child: the convulsion which cramps its little frame, the spasm that twists its pallid face, the battling of life and death, is a scene, once witnessed, never forgotten.

My husband on his return to the room looked at me with an expression which in one moment told me I was soon to be childless. “Is there no hope?” I whispered.

“None but in God;” and he knelt and took in his the tiny hand clenched with pain. In a few moments the laboured breathing stopped, the drawn form relaxed, all was still: gently he removed the pillow from my lap, upon which my little angel lay, and placed both on the sofa. For myself, I was tearless: my eyes were hot and dry: weep I could not, neither could I realise my loss. My husband went out and brought in the reluctant girl. Silently drawing her into the room,

“Do you know,” said he, “that you have murdered that child?”

She fell on her knees, “Oh! sir, I did not mean to do it. I did not know there was any harm.”

“Then, why not have told your mistress, as the doctor said to you?”

“Because I was afraid, sir; the doctor looked so angry that I was sure if I told that I should be scolded.”

“And again I tell you, you have murdered my child!”

The girl looked with such pitiful anguish at me that I said, “That is enough: you may go, Ann.” For a long time after, she sat on the step of the stair outside the door sobbing as if her

heart would break ; but mine was turned to stone, a numbing despair settled on me, for welling up within was the silent reproach that if I had not gone in debt this had never been, and, instead of this surrounding misery of my own making, I had been a happy mother in my own native village. I could not say "This is God's hand," for through my own thoughtlessness had this grief overtaken me.

I spoke no words aloud : with that little dead form before me, all the past sprung up as a vision before my eyes. The childless father never attempted to console me ; he stood looking with a strong fixedness upon the death of his idol, for such she had been. Whether he blamed me at all I never knew. We were both roused from our reveries by the knock of the landlady. She came to ask us if she could be of any use. I was too heart-broken to ask any questions, and could only silently motion my assent. My husband left the room, and gently and tenderly did the woman perform all the little offices for the dead ; reverently was it carried out, and laid on a spare bed belonging to herself, and close adjoining to our own room. She busied herself in every necessary deed ; by her summons the undertaker came, and in every way she spared us as much as possible. And so the day passed on, and the weary night came ; but long ere this my husband had joined me. He could weep—could even attempt to console me ; but his words fell unheeded, my eyes were dry and hot ; I could only find relief in pacing the room and passing the sides of my handkerchief through my fingers, till bit by bit it was worn away, and bit by bit it fell on the floor unheeded. It was near midnight before we left our sitting-room ; together we looked at our little angel, so beautiful in its holy innocence. I kissed the little lips, and the icy coldness thrilled through my frame ; but still came no relief.

My husband slept at intervals through the night, but my eyes fixed themselves on the fantastic shadows thrown by the gas-lamp outside the window, and, if for a moment slumber stole upon me, I was instantly wakened by the fancied sound of that croup cough.

Slowly the morning broke ; my brain seethed and boiled ; I was giddy ; I could scarcely stand ; and could only find relief in motion. Hastily I threw a cloak over my shoulders, and with slippered feet went down stairs, forgetting in my hurry that my child was close adjoining. As I entered the sitting-room the first thing I saw was my little one's shoes side by side in the chair in which she was accustomed to be seated at the table. In a moment nature burst forth—the tears rained down

in torrents—in every limb I trembled and shook ; at last I fell across the chair in a faint, but still grasping the shoes. Frederick, hearing the noise, came to me, but for hours reason tottered on her throne ; all that tender attention could do to soothe my grief was done—all that love could express in words or acts was lavishly given, but still the sting was there, and when I was implored not to be rebellious at God's will, I answered so impetuously, "It is no act of God ; I did it myself," then, indeed, it was feared I was speaking from delirium ; and as the relief of tears became no longer such, I seemed to be possessed with perpetual motion. I had no rest but in movement ; the sight of my dead infant brought only remorse, so that when the day of the funeral came, so much dreaded by my husband for its probable effect upon me, I allowed the little coffin to be taken away, and myself placed in the carriage as one of its mourners without even a struggle. My house seemed on my return even more desolate than before. Almost the first words I uttered were, "Let us go from here."

"Shall we take the house ?" asked my husband.

"What house ?" It had entirely gone from my memory, to which with some pains it was recalled. "Oh, no ! not there," anywhere in a different direction.

CHAPTER II.

HOUSE-HUNTING : ITS TROUBLES — EARLY RISING — PRACTICE
MAKES PERFECT—COOKERY.

SINCE my babe's death there was nothing to keep me at home ; I could accompany my husband everywhere ; indeed, I could only feel relief from sorrow in the most rapid movements ; no distance was too great, and fatigue I knew not. Day after day was passed in the same manner, and thus would have continued (for all interest in a house had ceased) but for a letter which we found one evening on our return, announcing that the furniture was sent off, and would arrive in three days. What was now to be done ? I had not yet replaced my unfortunate servant, whom I could not bear the sight of ; we were unwilling to send her home to our own village, where, from her lips, our adventures would have done duty for a "sensation" novel ; the landlady soon procured her a situation with some one else who had no baby, and

where her feet were required to be as nimble as the capabilities of her tongue. After reading the letter aloud I abruptly asked, "What's to be done?"

"Nothing, dear Milly, while you are in your present humour."

"Then, where are we to put our furniture if nothing is to be done?" I asked.

My husband, with a kindness more freshly remembered after all these years than it was heeded then, got up from his chair, gently removed my bonnet and shawl, drew a seat to my side, poured me out a cup of tea, and, putting his arm round my waist, said—

"Let us eat and drink, then talk the matter over. Sweet-heart, you must be brave for my sake."

"For yours? What can I help you in?"

"In everything," was the rejoinder; "but not another word upon 'ways and means' until we are both refreshed."

I turned suddenly round and looked at my husband; he was pale and careworn—I had never observed deep lines in his face till that moment. The selfishness and waywardness of my temper only on that very day rose giant-like before me. "Frederick, forgive me," I said. "I will do what you wish and will not repine, if I can help it," I added in a lower tone.

"Well, then," said he, laughingly, "let the test of your obedience commence. Eat and drink."

Every scene of the evening is indelibly photographed on my brain—a new phase of life seemed to open up to me. The meal was taken, and its paraphernalia removed; my husband took the initiative, did not ask me if I liked this or that situation, but said, "The house at thirty pounds, which stands in the open space of garden ground, close to the field of forty acres, will be just the thing for us. I should think it would be some years before the now pretty view can be built out. It is only three miles from London, perhaps a little more to the office, but that does not signify. The house is just the one for us; I mean the finished one of the four houses near to the church which is in progress. We shall have no neighbours yet, and I have observed very common people do not live in semi-detached houses; they like to congregate near a market, and so ought we, as a matter of economy, but I think fresh air better than very cheap food. So, little wife, this is settled. To-morrow I will close with the landlord, and go to the waggon office to have the furniture brought on. And now for a help. I don't know much about these things; but as good a servant as can be got for ten pounds wages we will have. While I arrange with the landlord to-morrow, you must find her. My sister, you know, always gets the best she can for the same money, and

declares it is false economy to hire as a single servant an inexperienced girl, even if she could be had for nothing."

"Yes, my mother was much averse to my having Ann, and said that I should find her far more expensive in carelessness, breakage, and idleness than she would like to have encountered. Don't let us revive the unhappy recollection, or I shall be unnerved again."

"Well, well, let it pass ; 'tis hard for the young girls, but neither you nor I can be any further made martyrs for their sakes ; though, if everybody thought alike upon this point, it would be sad for them."

"We always had a young girl under old Maggie, you know, and she used to say that a young servant should never enter service but to be placed under an older one. If Maggie were here but for a day, she would say that women, however poor, want some little relief, to take their baby off their hands, and help in some way, so that it would be impossible to act alike in every case."

Not to lengthen out this story with petty details, interesting only to myself, because they were my first experiences, I will mention that I found a healthy bright-looking Irish girl willing to be servant of all work. She had a good character for honesty, sobriety, cleanliness, and intelligence, and was only parted from because the mistress desired to have one of lower wages. She could also come to me directly, which was a great blessing.

We had taken our apartments for a month, and, by an oversight, had omitted to stipulate for another week after we had arranged for the house ; consequently, on the day our month's term expired we had to vacate the rooms for a new occupant. We set out with our luggage from the house which had been the scene of so much woe, and, accompanied by Bridget, who seemed rather to enjoy the excitement of removal than otherwise, we arrived at our new home ; but we had all forgotten that it was to an empty domicile we were coming without provisions and without coals. Bridget's services were speedily in requisition, to explore the neighbourhood, and find out shops, "for they must be somewhere," as she remarked, though I could only see on the one hand tall houses being erected, and on the other, half a mile distant, by the road-side a small shed-looking place, from whose solitary chimney the blue smoke was curling with a bravado exultation of comfort. "An' which way will I go?" said Bridget, as she stood in the road, looking up and down, for in front was a large expanse of market garden, and behind a field called Forty Acres stretched far away, and in the distance we could see men and horses ploughing. "Well, there's

men at the houses out there; they'll tell me," and off she set as fast as her legs could carry her. In half an hour she returned with her information that coals, and tea, and bread could be obtained at Fyshe's, the very "shieling" where the smoke proclaimed that it came from comfortable quarters.

"Run, Bridget, and get all you want; tell them to bring it here, and your mistress will pay, for I must go to look after the furniture," said my husband.

"It is getting nearly dark, Milly," he continued: "you are not afraid to wait here alone till Bridget returns?"

"Oh, no!—but ——"

"Now, little wife, be brave: nothing can harm you. I will send for some wood and kindle a fire, if I can but find a match; down in the lower regions is the most likely place to look, I think." And away he rushed, singing, "There's a good time coming." He soon returned with an armful of shavings and some pieces of wood, left behind by the workmen, but no match. I then bethought myself of some in my writing-desk, so we unpacked a trunk and found them. Even at that moment I could not but think how much even one single match could add to our comforts. The fire crackled and blazed up the chimney, and a sense of returning warmth (for it was a cold March day) made me feel less irritable. "If we only had something to eat now, little woman, it would be jolly." At that moment Bridget entered, breathless and indignant.

"The spalpeens won't let me have anything without I pay for it down, and fetch it away myself; and how can I bring coals? bad cess to 'em!"

"Bridget, come with me," said my husband, snatching his hat from the table, and before I could remonstrate both were gone.

For one hour I waited patiently, a prey to sad thoughts and grieved retrospection. How different from a month ago! Hearing a noise in the road, I looked out on the dimness of a misty evening and could just discern Bridget carrying a well-laden basket, and a boy with a barrow. The latter was soon about to enter the hall with a sack on his back, when Bridget cried out,

"Stop, till I see where I'll put the coals."

"Then, I'll just shut 'em here," was the reply; and down went the coals on the door-step.

I heard a smack given, and others followed. I then went out just in time to save the contents of the basket from mingling with the scattered coal.

"Bridget, come in directly, and send the boy away."

"I ain't going till I got the basket, for you no' she n'ther," and he sprang into the passage and stood with his dirty boots on the clean white paint at the sides—though this was an after discovery. The basket was quickly emptied, and the boy dismissed.

"But your master, Bridget?"

"Please, ma'am, he said he must go after the furniture, and he would soon be back."

"He has gone the wrong way, then," said I.

"Oh! no, ma'am, 'tis ever so much nearer; at the bottom of the long road (which we cannot see now, though) is Islington, and master said it would save him quite an hour; an' I saw Patrick, and he tould me we could get everything there."

"And who is Patrick?"

"Sure it's only one of the boys that worked near me last place. So now we'll make some tea; but where will be the kettle to boil it in?"

We looked at each other in dismay; neither kettle, nor teapot, nor anything to drink tea out of, had we got.

"Och, missis, what'll I do now? There! I didn't think! Can't you find anything in your boxes?" said she, suggestively.

I shook my head as the tears started. I looked round the room, taking in at a glance the utter discomfort of my position. Bridget followed my eyes, and said suddenly, "Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk; I'll go shovel up the coals if I only had sinse where to find the cellar." She caught up a candle from the other things which had come in the basket, lighted it, and went down stairs. I heard her searching about for a few minutes, when a shout of delight reached my ears. "Haven't I got the luck!" she exclaimed, as she entered the room with a pewter pot and a tin can in her hand, and holding the candle against them, as if to show off their fair proportions. I did not see such particularly good luck in her discovery, till she proceeded to put the can containing water on the fire, and explained that it was her intention to heat the water, wash out the cans, make a kettle of the tin one, while the other was to do service for a tea-cup. After these processes had been gone through, and the water was boiling fast, she took up the tea package, and threw some of its contents into the boiling water. I could not say to her that I disliked to drink boiled tea, for I was beginning to find out how ignorant I was of the world's ways, and in truth I was faint for want of sustenance; I was in a stage beyond complaint, and greedily devoured the mixture my ingenious damsel had brewed, expecting to find it with a medi-

cinal flavour, but, on the contrary, it was agreeable enough for me to ask for a second draught. I attributed the pleasantness of the tea to the pewter, for I had heard my husband say that porter was much better when drunk from a pewter vessel. I saw Bridget was looking wistfully, but, from observation of her character, was quite sure I should not be long in ignorance.

"I s'pose, ma'am, you haven't a knife anywhere?"

"No, Bridget; you can break the bread. I'm not hungry."

"But how'll I spread the butter?"

"As you can," said I, wearied to death.

"But sure now, haven't ye got a knife in your pocket?"

"Oh, yes," I said, in an altered tone, glad to find I had some useful thing, "here's a fruit-knife."

"Well, then, you can break the bread and spread the butter, for eat you must. If I'd only had the sinse in me down yonder, I'd ha' got something better."

The warm kindness of the girl was not to be borne down. I ate to gratify her, and was refreshed. The fire was kept burning, and the can of water boiling, in expectation of my husband's return. My watch had stopped, and we could not mark the time. I sat on a box with a shawl over my head, leaning it against the side of the fire-place, overpowered with fatigue, and dozing, letting Bridget come and go unquestioned. Presently we were startled by a loud knock, and in a few moments my husband entered, with the tidings that the furniture had not arrived, and was not likely to do so before morning.

"We'll just have to sit up then all night; anyhow, we've got some coal," said Bridget, undismayed by the prospect, and busily proceeding to pour out some tea, and then pushing the bread and butter towards him, said, "Sure it's that'll cheer ye up."

My husband looked first at one, then at the other, then at the tea, and burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. The empty house rung with his hilarity. His mirth was catching, for Bridget looked cheerily up, saying, "It might be worse."

"True, Bridget, for we have only to picnic in an empty house instead of in the green wood and in a thunder-storm."

This seemed rather beyond Bridget's comprehension; for she instantly asked—

"But how'll the missis sleep?"

"Very well, my good girl; but what will you do?"

"I'll just make a fire in the big room overhead. I can lie down afore it till the morning."

My husband gave her his thick wrapper, and after, as she termed, "settlin' the room" which we were in, she departed; and how thankful I was that her cheery help had been given to me!

With wrappings, and conversation, and a bright fire, the early part of the night passed away; but the morning chill awakened us from our uneasy slumbers before daylight. We could hear Bridget throw up a window, and soon she came to announce that a heavy waggon was lumbering up the road. The good news proved true. Our household goods had at last arrived. Now I should again make a home. Exultation in the future swallowed up present discomfort. To enter into all the mishaps we endured, to enumerate our damaged furniture, our battlings with those we employed "to get a fair day's work for a fair day's wage," and a thousand and one other disagreeables, not to mention the constant recurrence to our daily account of expenditure, when we soon found that shillings and sixpences disbursed had a marvellous way of condensing themselves into sovereigns, which process only made our purse lighter instead of heavier,—would only render my narrative tiresome, without benefiting any person.

There is only one experience I would mention, as it was one which placed my character for hospitality at stake. We had engaged a jobbing blind-maker to put up our blinds at a given sum, to save expense, instead of applying to a proper establishment where the conductors would have been answerable for the incapability of their workmen. So the window-frames were cut about, and the blind-rollers fixed in the most slovenly fashion, while the blinds, to use an expressive word, technically called *slang*, were *nowhere*; they could not keep sunlight out, nor screen us from passers-by if any there were. This man, Haker by name, would not, or could not, remedy the defects, so he was paid his bill as agreed upon, and got rid of as a nuisance, and the blinds were soon after made to do their duty by an experienced workman sent from a blind-maker's. So far we only were the dupes. Time passed on, and the adjoining house was taken by another young couple. Haker waited on them, and solicited their work, at the same time showing his receipted bill for making our blinds. His services were at once accepted, not dreaming of an unsatisfactory result. Our neighbours had the precaution to partially furnish their house before entering; and on the afternoon of their arrival, Haker, being busy at a blind, was hastily requested by the servant to borrow some salt from us. "Not for the world," said he; "they

are just two devils, and won't give a pinch of salt to save your life." I will only just mention here that years of practical experience have taught me it is ever the cheapest, seemingly dear though it be, to employ skilled workmen; you may be sure that the work of an unpractised hand, whether male or female, is a costly experiment, resulting in dissatisfaction and discomfort. The proverb, "Bad servants make bad masters," is not so true as that "Bad servants are always slanderers," and this axiom does not apply to domestic servants only, but to all unskilled hands from whom service is required.

We will now pass over six months; my husband did not become Richard Fenton's substitute in his office for a longer period; the practice was sold, and he went abroad. For some weeks Fred's health had failed him, not sufficiently so as to call for advice, or to cause alarm, but still he seemed to have a disinclination to active exertion.

"Something oppresses me; I cannot throw it off, Milly," said he, "and I have need for work."

So days and weeks went on, and at length another little cherub was born to fill the lost one's place. "Now," thought I, "Bridget's temper will be tried; if I do the work myself, I will have no thoughtless girl as help." On my restoration to my domestic duties one grave error I quickly fell into. The child was scarcely ever permitted to be out of my arms day or night. I had been a reasonable mother before; now husband, house, servant, all were neglected for my infant. Bridget was a good, almost invaluable girl in carrying out orders, but had no faculty to contrive or think; indeed, the want of the latter power was her chief failing, known as well to herself as to me. "If I had but the *sense* to think!" was her constant exclamation. Hitherto our dinners had been neatly and nicely served, and our expenses kept within bounds. No washing had been put out excepting so much as would amount to two shillings a week; Bridget did the rest. I ironed all but my husband's shirts; these I felt I was not accomplished enough in the art for; and thus about a shilling a week was saved, the remaining tenpence being spent in soap and other necessities; and thus this three and tenpence a week, or ten pounds a year, which we had allowed for washing, was expended.

At first my husband felt hurt at this exclusive devotion to my child, more particularly as it sensibly injured the child's health, which was pining for want of the fresh air. I could not give it; my own strength was insufficient for the burden of carrying the babe, and in those days perambulators were not.

"Let Bridget take out the child this morning," said my husband, testily.

"Very well," I said, "as you like; but we must dine later if she does."

"That will not signify, so that the child gets health and you relief."

And so Bridget, not very reluctantly, was made head nurse for the time being. I always suspected Patrick's proximity to our neighbourhood, and, from her excessive readiness for the walk, in my inner mind I fancied he was not far distant. We usually dined at four o'clock; it was now one, and my last words were, "Bridget, recollect you have not prepared for the dinner; be sure you are home at two." Three o'clock came, and Bridget had not returned. In my anxiety for my babe I thought nothing of my husband's meal, and, indeed, I am not sure that I could have cooked a dinner if I had desired to do so. Soon after three Bridget entered with my boy sweetly asleep and well wrapped up. I saw at once no harm had come to it.

I said very crossly, "Bridget, where have you been?"

"Oh! missus, I didn't think 'twas so late; but I'll soon see to the dinner;" and that was all that was done to it. The potatoes were half cooked, the meat soddened, cinders had got into the gravy, and the whole affair was deplorable.

Time after time the same thing occurred, till even my husband's patient sweetness of temper was fast giving way, and my own was becoming almost shrewish. I took myself seriously to task; how was this to be remedied? Expenses were getting ahead too; substitutes of eggs or bacon were often had recourse to, to cover up the deficiency of a dinner which was uneatable; extra tea had to be used for the lack of boiling water and forethought of mine, for Bridget could not think—this was her failing. My husband was at the time engaged in reading up for his profession, and desired only to have the house kept quiet, while at the same time good and digestible food, regularly served, was absolutely necessary for his health, which had ever been dependent upon extraneous circumstances, and, though not requiring to be nursed, he had no robustness to draw upon. Somehow, the baby had turned our little world upside down. Washing day was now a positive discomfort, whereas before it was little seen or heeded; the muddle I had got myself into looked dangerous. I sat one evening with my babe asleep in my lap; my husband was in his study; I was musing on all my past life, and shuddering at the future. I felt the want of a higher leading than my own capricious will, and I prayed earnestly—even without moving or

audible utterance—as I had seldom prayed, that I might be led to do what was right; for I felt a dim consciousness that my husband's love was drifting away from me. In the tumult of my mind—in the earnestness of my desire—I could see no path; but afterwards, in the peace of other thoughts, bearing no impress of my present troubles, my way seemed made plain before me, and the very next day I put in practice my theory.

I had been accustomed to rise only just in time for a nine o'clock breakfast. Consequently my boy was brought down into the room unwashed and untidy, and in the same room all his washing apparatus and dressing gear were laid out, at first much to my husband's annoyance; but as fire in another room would have been necessary, or I must have gone down to Bridget's kitchen, the point was given up. On this morning I rose, without awakening my husband, at seven, much to the surprise of Bridget. My baby was fed, washed, and dressed, and I put on my bonnet and shawl, and took him into the garden for half an hour. He soon fell asleep, for children are always awake with the birds. I then brought him in, and laid him in his cot, and had every trace of his ablutions removed. I certainly felt weary and faint, but the old adage of "Practice makes perfect" occurred to me.

I don't know if I ought to digress by telling a story I had read when a girl; but I sometimes think that God speaks to us, if we did but notice it, as much, though not in the same way, as he did to the prophets of old. The story is this:—A Persian king, who was noted for his exquisite skill in archery, once, as an antelope was lying on a distant hill, touching its ear with its foot, pinned with an arrow the two together, and then turned to his beautiful queen, Parysatis, for her approbation. The gentle woman saw no skill in such wanton cruelty, neither smiled nor applauded, but said with indifference, "Practice makes perfect, my lord." The king, indignant at this treatment, not only banished her from his presence, but commanded her death. An old courtier, who was privately her friend, stepped forward with haste to accomplish the deed. The queen was delivered into his care, and privately conveyed out of the confines of Persia to a herdsman's hut, where she so endeared herself to the old man and his wife that she became as a daughter unto them. A twelvemonth and more passed away; the king was inconsolable for the loss of his murdered queen—albeit he was the murderer—and he spent his time chiefly in hunting. One day, having wandered far from his attendants, and not knowing where he was, he stood for some time looking on the prospect, and waiting for his retinue to come up. Presently

he heard a calf bleat, and from a rock at no great distance he observed a young maiden wend her way down the rugged path to the valley beneath, where stood the animal. After fondling and petting it for some moments, she took the calf in her arms, and, ascending the pathway of the rock, was soon out of sight. The monarch, amazed at such an exhibition of strength in so young and delicate a girl, descended from his position, and also followed the upward path till he arrived at the cottage, where he saw the herdsman and his wife, who told him she was their daughter. He then asked to see her. Parysatis—for it was no other—on hearing this, came into his presence from an inner room, veiled. “How is this?” said he to her. “Are you gifted with the power of sorcery that you can carry up an ascent like this an animal which I could not lift?”

“Practice makes perfect, my lord,” said Parysatis in a feigned voice. The king’s terror was so great at these words that he fainted. Parysatis, whose love for her husband had never been extinguished, hastened to revive the horror-stricken guest, and in thus doing her veil was cast aside, so that when the king opened his eyes they rested upon a form he supposed to be that of his murdered wife, but whose expression beamed with a loveliness surpassing all his vivid remembrance of her matchless charms. Explanation and mutual forgiveness speedily followed. The king asked her by what magic she could carry with ease a far greater weight than he could lift. “It need not surprise you, my lord,” said she, “and, at the risk of reproof, I must again give you my talisman, ‘PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.’ When I came to this cottage, on the night of my arrival I found this young calf so weak, so ill, that my good parents here (for so I shall ever deem them) thought it must die. I wanted something to interest me, and to withdraw my reflections from my sorrows, for to the world I was dead. The creature I fed and tended, and took it down every day to its mother, which grazes in yonder valley, and every evening the youngling answered to my call, when I carried it up the rock, and warmly housed it for the night; and thus cheerfully bearing my burden day by day, I neither felt its growth increase nor found myself less able to bear its weight. Exercise gave me health, and occupation banished weariness: these are the only magic charms I have used.”

It was the resolution which this proverb inspired that, when I found myself so wearied with my early and unusual work, kept me from complaint, when my husband came down, much sur-

prised at the change so visible in the morning's arrangements. The tea was made, the water boiling, the bacon smoking hot, and the child asleep in his cot, ready dressed for the day, making so perfect a picture that it is recalled now with pleasure. Frederick looked surprised, but forbore remark; he felt sure it was only a freak; to-morrow things would revert to their usual course. I have since found that I read his thoughts most truly. Seeing this expression in his face, I also was silent, and talked as if the new arrangement had been no more than usual.

Baby slept till eleven o'clock, during which time I helped Bridget with her work, much to her wonder. She protested against any need of help, but I persisted, and when we had finished, "Now, Bridget," said I, when baby woke and was fed, "put on your bonnet, you shall carry baby, and I will walk with you into Islington; there is no fear of any one coming; it will not be post-time till two o'clock. I will tell your master that we are going."

My husband coming in at that moment, I merely said, "I am going to Islington with Bridget to get some things I want; no one is likely to come while we are gone."

Our walk was a pleasant one; the baby was awake the whole time, and was quiet and refreshed. In an hour we had returned to home and its duties—Bridget somewhat bewildered, for I heard her say as she descended the stairs, "What's come to the missis now?"

In furtherance of the unexpressed plan I had laid down, I was determined to learn everything I possibly could in the way of cooking. Bridget's was a haphazard way of proceeding; sometimes the food was well dressed, but oftener very indifferently so; some system I thought there must be, and this I was determined to find out. The invaluable and experienced services of our old Maggie at home had precluded the necessity of my being instructed in the culinary art; but now how could Bridget help me, even if she were disposed, which I much doubted? Her temper was peculiar; she disliked interference and being found fault with; all her efforts in cooking were, in her eyes, perfection, no matter how palpable were the failures: "Sure an' it's the fire won't burn," or, "The weather's heavy," or the fault was in every thing or person but herself. Certainly this was untractable material from which to extract golden knowledge, but in the absence of better this must be done. She could boil potatoes and meat well—this was something to begin upon certainly; so in the afternoon, while baby was sleeping, I made my appearance in the kitchen for the purpose of

finding a particular cup, which I knew to be in my own room. Bridget was, as I expected, peeling the potatoes. "Why do you take two waters to wash them in?" I asked.

"Because they wouldn't be white if I didn't."

"Oh! I see," said I; "you peel a potatoe, then wash it in one water, and throw it into the next directly. Yes, they do look very white. Ah! and all the dirt is washed off first before you peel them."

"Sure, an' I wouldn't be making ye ate the moold, would I?"

"Do you cover them with hot or cold water when you boil them?" I asked, still carefully feeling my way.

"Why, if I should cover 'em with water they'd be drowned, poor things, and wouldn't be at all maly; and if I was to put biling water on 'em they'd be waxy. I steam 'em. Ah! missis, it takes a time to understand a petaty; they don't like much water."

"Well, Bridget, I have a fancy I should like to understand cooking, and you must teach me."

"'Tisn't after the likes o' me to tache; but I do know a little; and sure the house is yer own, and ye can do as ye plaze;" and so it was settled I was to take lessons in cooking from Bridget; that was the ostensible object in coming into the kitchen while dinner was dressing; but the real one was to make experiments, and bring Bridget round to my way of thinking.

In course of time I succeeded, too, in this object, but it was a long and tedious process. I consulted various cookery books, but they contradicted each other, and, besides, required so many expensive ingredients that were beyond, far beyond, our twenty-seven shillings a week.

CHAPTER III.

PUNCTUALITY — HOW TO KEEP A DINNER WARM — BERTHA CHAPMAN'S VISIT—HER MANAGEMENT.

It would become wearisome to detail the various ways by which I arrived at fame, at peace, and comfort. You may smile, for I did become famous as a household manager—so my friends thought. I certainly very often pondered upon the magical process, whatever it might have been, which enabled me to retain, to his dying hour, the love of my husband in its freshest form, and

not only this, but to create an ever-springing affection far more reliable than when our marriage vows were spoken. But I can understand it all now, in the loneliness of my old age, with none left to tend my wants but hired hands.

In the early part of my married life, before my days of reformation, an intuitive feeling made me fear that my husband's love was drifting away—there is no other term to call it; there seemed not much visible outward sign, but nevertheless it was fact. In all my life, to see and know an evil was, with me, to remedy it. To lament a bygone of any kind, which it was not in my power to avert or to repair, I always considered a weakness. If I could remedy the error, I did so, and at once, and I never stopped at half-measures, which only wrought confusion. Thoroughly did I enter upon the matter, whatever it was—take up my burden with all my strength, and walk straight on; hence it has been said of me, “Whichever way she falls, it is on her feet.” The trials I have passed through need not be dilated upon here; they have been enough to make the bravest heart succumb, but mine never did; a *higher* Power upheld me; that I felt, and also that a miraculous strength seemed to pour into my spirit when it was needed; therefore I had no fear for the future, how dark soever the present hour, and it was always with the present I had to deal. My business now was to win back my husband's interest in me—to live for him alone; beauty of face or grace of form I never possessed; but the same charm which won him (and it did from beautiful and wealthy rivals) could, I thought, also keep him. My dress had been slightly neglected, for I had in my carelessness imagined that anything would do for home. “That will do, nobody's coming,” was too frequently my mental ejaculation, and thus a crumpled ribbon or collar would occasionally offend my husband's critical eye, the offence seen more in its expression than by any utterance of tongue.

Again, punctuality was unheeded; it mattered not to me whether dinner was ready at the appointed hour, or ten or twenty minutes later, even half an hour I thought not of importance, and yet in my own home my mother was the soul of exactitude; in fact, her *fussings* on this point seemed to me to be a fault, and many times before marriage I mentally thought that to be so very punctual was to be very often troublesome—to idle people especially—for it was always a scamper with me to be in time for meals.

How often since I had been my own housekeeper had I seen

my husband come home at the dinner hour, and say, "I am quite famished—is dinner ready? it is past the time."

"It will soon be on the table," was the reply. But, alas! whenever it came, if it had to be waited for, Fred's appetite was gone, and, to my mortification, he scarcely more than tasted of the food. Next to my early rising, which I found to be indispensable for comfort, I endeavoured to become punctual, and this was my hardest task. Again and again I tried, and failed—I could not be exact. One day I was reading the Life of Nelson, and it was said that he owed all his success to being always a quarter of an hour beforehand for any appointment or object that he had in view; not that he actually kept the appointment at a quarter before time, but was always *ready* for it. The words seemed to stand luminously out from the page, and forced themselves upon my sense, so that they recurred continually to my memory, and could not be forgotten.

I had now become an adept in our homely cooking, and knew that overcooked food, particularly vegetables, were equally injurious with those which were undercooked. I puzzled my weary head a long time how to keep the vegetables hot without injury to them. Upon my consulting Bridget, to my infinite relief she replied,

"That's easy done, anyhow, all but the petaties."

"Well, then, dinner is to be ready a quarter before four exactly, and it has to be kept warm till four; and I must come into the kitchen and see how you manage."

When the time came I had forgotten all this till Bridget came to say she was going to dish up. I saw her temper was not to be trifled with, or I should have said "not dish up." To my astonishment, I found she had dished up; everything was ready to come on to the table but her darling treasures, the "petaties;" they were steaming away as if over the funnel of a miniature steam-engine. The greens had been taken up and drained in the colander, the greater portion of the water remaining in the saucepan; a tea-saucer had been turned upside down in a vegetable dish, upon this the greens had been placed, and the cover of the dish put on; the dish placed over the nearly boiling water in the saucepan, kept the former as hot as possible without drying the contents. The meat had been taken from the jack and placed in an old dish on the top of the oven, and covered with a large dish cover, and over that was placed a cloth, well tucked in to prevent its catching smoke or blaze. The dripping-pan was removed, and on the *draw-out* of the grate was placed upside down the dish in

which the meat was to be served ; the gravy, from which every particle of fat had been removed, was waiting the usual adjuncts before pouring it on the meat dish.

"The 'petaties' will be done on the minute," said Bridget, who looked at the clock. "In five minutes it'll be all on the table." And punctually to the moment it was.

My husband, to his surprise, was called, and the pleasure which flushed over his face when he saw the dinner steaming hot was ample reward for all my trouble. On lifting the cover which concealed the greens, my chagrin was great to see water quite over the rim of the inverted saucer. Bridget saw it too.

"That's nothing," said she ; "I didn't think——" and instantly the dish was taken to the side-table, and the offending water poured into a plate.

"That's all right now," said I ; "but, Bridget, I did not see the pudding."

"Surely you have not forgotten my rice, Bridget?"

"Oh, no, sir ; that was baked yesterday ; I've only got to warm it."

"But, surely, that cannot be good ; the milk will be sour."

"You always praise my puddings, and shure you've always had it so ;" and she made good her retreat, with a slam of the door. When Bridget was in this humour it was best never to notice it ; all came round in time ; and she was invaluable in many respects. The pudding was very good, and finding it so led me afterwards to preparing the sweets a day before, such as tarts, milk puddings, and custard puddings. In after years I found this plan of great advantage, as, when visitors came unexpectedly, a passable dinner could always be made up, with the addition of fish, or hash, or mince, and this without delay, or making it appear that the table so served was anything different from our usual meal. Cold vegetables, all but cabbage, would warm admirably. Cold carrots, sliced thin, put into gravy or melted butter in a basin, covered down, and placed in the oven for a quarter of an hour, made an excellent and pretty dish. Cold parsnips could be mashed with milk, a little butter, pepper, and salt. Cold broccoli be warmed by putting it into a basin, then standing the basin in a saucepan of boiling water, and putting on the lid. Cold peas and beans in the same manner. Cold turnip-greens, or spinach, the same ; these two last, minced fine, and placed in the oven while a few rashers of bacon and some eggs were poached, and one of each placed on a sippet, with the spinach or greens between, made a dish most appetising, and one which we rarely saw our guests refuse. Ah, well, I got a bad name by all these contrivances, for

some of my lady visitors accused me, though not to my face, of being very extravagant, and were quite sure that a downfall must come; but it never did. I went on my way rejoicing; though all these things came slowly to me, not in the second or third year of my wedded life, but when with two little ones and one servant; then there was scarcely a day that my experience or my necessity did not teach me something.

At the end of the third year I began to be a little nervous about the insurance; we had so many expenses, and with no help but our income, that I did not see where the money was to come from. To my infinite relief, my husband brought me, one day, a new policy of insurance, which this time, instead of for a thousand pounds, was only for five hundred.

"This is all that we can do, Milly; it is useless attempting too much; however, I am glad that even this pittance can be secured; all of the twenty pounds which we appropriated for contingencies is, as you must be aware, spent; we have had many expenses not reckoned for, and which will not occur again, at least to the same extent; and for these, in the coming year, the money which would have insured for another five hundred must be set aside to meet them. I have no fear now, little wife; dearer, a thousand times dearer, than ever."

Tears were rolling down my cheeks as he folded me in his arms, and continued, "My own darling Milly, when we first came here I missed in you all the thousand little charms which wound themselves round my vagrant heart before I asked your love; then, dearest—ay, even only a short year ago, I pined for the bright smile, the loving glance, the cheery voice, which in our courting days had ever welcomed me. One sad year you buried them all out of sight, and I grieved to think that for me they would never spring again. But now, now, dearest, I forget sometimes that we are married—I forget that we are other than the lovers of old, till the merry crow of that boy yonder recalls me to the reality, the blessing of the reality, that you are mine only, my darling true wife."

Those who may read this story may guess my feelings; not one word of utterance rose to my lips, which I pressed to his forehead, then flew to my room, to be alone there with my God—to thank Him even for all I had suffered—to pray for that strength in well-doing which as yet, whatever brave show I might make, was but green and tender as an early rose-shoot. My besetting sin was an indolence of body. I liked to sit and dream for hours, and to put off till another time, if I could, a present duty. It is

useless now telling people this; they will never believe but that action, and energy of will and purpose, were of my nature. "It is impossible," say they; but it is nevertheless true, and what is mortifying, I am even now, and ever was, constantly falling into the bad habit. My children were around me before I had devised any certain method of managing my household affairs. Rooms were swept sometimes one day, sometimes another; occasionally all were littered and in process of cleaning at once. So that, if any one called upon us unawares and from a distance, no apartment was fit to ask them into, and the consequent confusion and flurry generally resulted in a nervous headache to myself, and an irritation of temper difficult to bear with by those who surrounded me.

When my second child could just run about, Bertha Chapman came to pay me a somewhat lengthened visit. We had been school-girls together, and at school our intimacy commenced, which had continued all these long years. At twenty-six she had married a widower of fifty, with four daughters and one son. She was a girl of spirit and intelligence, devoted to her husband and loved by his children. Disparity of years she never thought of.

"Milly," she said one day, as we were talking over our married life, "I am the happiest woman in existence; you cannot imagine how I reverence my noble husband; and my brothers and sisters (for I cannot help calling his children so) are the pleasure of my life when he is absent."

"But how in the world do you manage such an establishment?"

"Oh, easily enough," she replied. "You know my aunt who trained me was very systematic. I must confess to having some dread when I first came home, for the former Mrs. Chapman was, I had heard, an excellent manager. The discipline of the house had somewhat fallen away since her death, and I soon saw that the servants were careless, and disposed to look upon my coming as an innovation upon their rights. Robert, in a day or two after our return, said to me—

"There is but one servant that I care to retain, if any of the others are not agreeable to you, and even old Fanny I will pension off if she should be disposed to resent your interference in the present management. So continue them or discharge them, as you think fit."

"Having this power vested in me, with only one reserve, and holding the reins of punctuality and early rising in my hands,

my influence was despotic. On the morning after, I called all the four servants into the dining-room, and kindly, but firmly, made them understand that each must be down stairs by six o'clock, and none up in the evening after ten, excepting the upper housemaid; that each one must individually keep to her own work, but that, if I requested either of them to perform some duty not exactly within her province, she must do it without demur; and also that their daily duties, of which I would give them a list, must be punctually and thoroughly performed; of the latter mode I should myself judge. If they could not agree to these terms, it would be better for them to say so, and at once. Three of them at once accepted the regulations, and I have had little fault to find since. The cook turned restive then, but not afterwards. I had understood her chief fault was forgetfulness; the dinner would be well cooked, but frequently the appropriate sauces and vegetables would be omitted. Another circumstance, amounting to a nuisance, I had to complain of: the tradesmen, while waiting for orders, would assemble in the lower hall leading to the kitchen, and at this time the housemaids would join them, and the laugh and joke were freely passed; besides, these morning gatherings became the head-quarters for disseminating all the gossip of the house: who was visiting; who going; who cross; and who good-tempered. This I was determined to put down, and I did."

"Why, how could you do this? It is just what I complain of with my one servant. Bridget will gossip, for sometimes I really cannot at a moment tell what I should like for dinner, and while I am considering she is amusing herself."

"The remedy is very simple," replied Bertha. "I merely transferred the practice of my aunt's house to my new home. I wrote out on a strip of paper a bill of fare for the day, and underneath this, at some distance below, I wrote the different orders, such as the butcher's, the greengrocer's, and the fishmonger's, writing them very distinctly, and widely dividing them by a line, which line I afterwards nearly cut through, so that each respective order could be rapidly torn off and given to each party. In writing an order, say for the butcher, I distinctly defined the weight of joint, and whether I required much or little fat. The fishmonger sent in always his bill of fare, and two minutes sufficed for him. These orders I also transferred to the weekly books; and the dinner bill of fare the cook came to my dressing-room for at eight o'clock every morning. At ten punctually I went into the kitchen, and from thence she accompanied me to

the larder, where I directed what was to be sent up for luncheon, what meat and pudding should be served up for the servants' dinner. I had the bread-pan daily wiped out. The order for the bread was written in the bread-book—what loaves to change if it were needed, what quantity to take in—each was put down separately, whether loaves, rolls, brown bread, flour, or cakes; and I called both on baker and grocer, and gave them to understand that unless an order was in my writing they were not to deliver it."

"What! did you write down the grocer's order, too?"

"Most certainly I did. It is but little trouble, and an hour in the morning will suffice for all; besides, how is it possible to keep a check upon the expenditure of a limited income if such were not the case."

"But eight hundred a year is not a very limited income," I remarked.

"It all depends upon the requirements of a family whether it be considered large or small. There are four young people, myself and husband, four servants, and a boy, making in all eleven persons. The education of the younger children is not yet completed, and this swallows up a considerable sum; besides, Robert has claims upon him which I am not authorised to mention. So limited do we find eight hundred a year that for the last twelvemonth I have had all our dresses, excepting one, made at home."

"Made at home? Don't you find it very expensive to have a needlewoman in the house? They are always so slow."

"You do not know, perhaps, that I am a great adept with my needle. It was an accomplishment my aunt thought of paramount importance, and insisted upon it that no needlework should go out of the house. She got a clever dressmaker to come once a month, and, by dint of observation and some aptitude, I acquired sufficient of the art to cut out and make up a dress. I pouted and was sadly troubled at first; but how thankful I am now I can scarcely express."

"And you played so exquisitely, and your drawings used to be my envy; what a pity to lay down these acquirements, and degenerate into a mere household drudge! though I must say your appearance is not exactly that."

Bertha looked at me in amazement, and at last burst out into such a ringing laugh that the elder of the two children who were playing on the floor got up and ran across to her, rested her little arms on her lap, and said, "What did hoo laugh for?" while the

totty babe crawled to her feet, saying as fast as he could, "An' me too." She caught them both up, and broke out into such a torrent of song that convinced me, however much she had neglected her music and dancing, her voice had been cultivated to the highest extreme.

"Why, Milly," she exclaimed, "is it possible that you think a woman cannot unite accomplishments and usefulness? Surely they should go hand in hand together. You don't mean to tell me that you have given up your music—that you never play, never sing?"

"It is even so," I replied, a scarlet flush mounting to my face, for she sat with such provoking astonishment on her face that I felt myself no other than criminal.

Bertha, with a look of grave concern on her face, sat musing for some moments, then said—

"Milly, will you be offended with me if I speak very plainly to you? When at school, you will recollect, I was termed eccentric, and I have been called so since—though I never could understand in what thought or movement of mine my eccentricity consisted. Do you remember my being laughed at when I said that I believe all accomplishments were necessary for girls, and actual requirements in their education? Experience has taught me that my views are correct. Surely the years you studied music should not be as wasted time—to say nothing of the expense thrown away. Why should a girl be educated at all if she is soon after marriage to dwindle into a mere household machine? I have noticed how weary your husband is of an evening, and how he turns from the detail of your day's management and of Bridget's doings, seeking for refuge in a book, to read which is poison to his already over-worked brain."

"Bertha, do not blame me for this; you know he likes reading."

"Yes, as we like food for our sustenance, not for harm. You have accustomed him to this mode of passing the evening, varied occasionally by a walk, during which the same home topic goes on."

Here I broke in most vehemently, "You know nothing about it, Bertha. Why should you blame me for Fred's quietness? he wishes to be quiet."

"In any home but my own, Milly, I am chary of offering to amuse the master of it; but you know my own devotion to Robert, and therefore will not misconstrue my motives; to-night I shall try the experiment."

I laughed consent, but felt sure no experiment was needed: things were best as they were. Fred always looked tired and grave; why should he be disturbed? Evening came; it seemed an effort for my husband to join in the conversation. Bertha sat quietly talking to me for some time, when she said—

“Milly, do you recollect any of your old songs?”

“Yes; but my voice is gone from want of practice.”

“Never mind, come and try; perhaps it will come back again.”

I involuntarily turned to look at my husband; a shade passed over his face as he buried himself deeper in his book. Presently the most exquisite melody breathed round the room; no loud chords broke the charm—it was as if an angel had touched the instrument. My husband put down his book, threw his head back, and closed his eyes; still the same heavenly strains went on, and ultimately a voice seemed to rise in the atmosphere, so perfect in its modulation, so charmingly liquid in all its tones, that I could not help exclaiming, “How delightful!” When it ceased my husband rose, came to the piano, and said—

“Bertha, you are like David of old—capable of chasing away evil spirits; at all events *your* voice has not run away.”

“Neither has Milly’s,” I replied; “it is only stored away for the present.”

“I used to like Milly’s singing better than yours, but I never hear her voice now,” he said with a sigh; “the children take up all her time.”

I was about to reply, but Bertha, I thought somewhat hastily, asked for some information respecting some people whom she had told me she did not care a straw for. I certainly fancied she was inconsistent; however, this led to desultory but amusing conversation through the rest of the evening, which glided gradually away. I had not seen Fred so bright-looking for many a day; I could not but rejoice at this, though a jealous pang arose when I reflected that it was other efforts than mine which had aroused my husband into something like gaiety. However, this evil spirit of jealousy I strangled before it had time for more than to show its existence. Fortunate, indeed, was it that strength was given me to resist the selfish feeling which poisons every enjoyment, for this evening was the beginning of a new life. Insensibly a brighter influence encircled us. In conversation, reading, and music, in which I bore my part, the days became scarcely long enough, and the evenings I looked forward to with delight. The children thrived amazingly upon the diet which Bertha insisted they should have, and Bridget was rarely unamiable; she was not called upon at unusual times

to make a light pudding for baby, and to beat up an egg in milk for the eldest child, "and then missis always crying out about the expense; for, mem, she never will think that all the *littles* cost anything—'tis only the mate and the petaties she reckons upon."

Robert Chapman, Bertha's husband, had gone to the West Indies, accompanied by his son, to look after some property that had descended to him by the will of a recently deceased relative. The eldest daughter was visiting an aunt, and the three youngest were at school. Bertha had determined upon paying this visit to us, and had left the house under the care of old Fanny and the cook; the other servants were at board wages. On her first coming she had insisted upon paying some portion of our weekly expenses, but seeing how very little her plan was liked, and that to press the matter would have been cause of some offence, she desisted, though many a luxury found its way to our table, which, but for her, would have been unattainable. Fanny, by her mistress's orders, frequently despatched a hamper containing delicacies, which could not be refused, and which no remonstrance could prevent from appearing; so that at last we quietly gave in to Bertha's "whim," as she called it, and accepted the good things with thankfulness. In the intervals between these arrivals, Bertha contrived to become housekeeper. She ordered the dinners, and managed the scraps so well, that Bridget replied to an inquiry I one day made as to the dinner—"Shure, 'tis a French dinner Mrs. Chapman will be after sending up to-day." In short, everything went on so admirably, yet so quietly, that, as my friend's visit was now limited to three or four weeks, I felt much regret at her leaving, and, knowing that I should again fall into my unsystematic ways, I got her to draw up a programme (if I may use the term) of management, which I must give here, or my story will be incomplete. See, here she has headed it—

"Early rising—Punctuality—Despatch, and a place for everything."

How musical was her laugh as she wrote, at the same time making gentle excuses for such important words, as she termed them—

"Milly, dear, you must get out of your dreamy moods; whatever presents itself in the shape of duty, let it be grappled with at the right moment; if it be disagreeable, never mind, grasp it at once; don't stay thinking about it. You know the old rhyme—

'Tender-handed touch the nettle,
And it stings you for your pains;
Grasp it like a man of mettle,
And it soft as silk remains.'

So, little friend, difficulties vanish before resolution and action."

"But, Bertha, I have not the strong will and power you have. With you to will is to do; with me it is different. I am naturally the slave of circumstances."

"Milly, Milly, stop; don't acknowledge to such weakness. If you make yourself the slave of circumstances, they will rule you; but once bend circumstances to your will, and the victory is gained. I understand but two to which we must all bow—sickness and death; these excepted, we can be brave under all others. Be dauntless in the right——"

"Now, Bertha, how can I always judge what is right? You know how tiresome Bridget is, and when I require things to be done one way, she will insist upon doing them in a different manner."

"Bridget sees that your orders are merely the result of caprice, not of judgment or knowledge; and this observation of her quick-witted intellect makes her flippant, almost impertinent. Those below us must see some superior quality in their employers to respect. A self-styled architect who had no more knowledge than a bricklayer would not be able to govern his men. So it is with a mistress: if she really knows nothing of household management, there will be insubordination among her domestics, and even contempt exhibited."

"What can I do? Bridget will never act differently now, however I may alter," I said helplessly.

"No, perhaps not; but at all events you can begin upon a system, and leave Bridget to fall into your ways as she likes, or not; so that, should you be obliged to have some one in her place, the new-comer will not see your deficiency."

"Well, then," I replied, and inclined to be angry, "since you can see, Mrs. Mentor (I am sure Mentor was never so tiresome as you), what I ought to do, perhaps you will give me a list of duties to be performed, omissions to be winked at, pleasures to be enjoyed, smiles to be indulged in, &c., &c., to the end of the chapter."

"If you are satirical, Milly, I have nothing more to say. It is for your good, not mine, that I have proffered my greater experience for your guidance; but let it all pass. I will take baby into the garden, and have a romp with both the children;" and, so saying, she turned away with a graver expression on her countenance than I had ever yet witnessed. My pride would not then allow me to apologise for my ebullition of temper.

Since Bertha's stay with us I had seen the advantage of order, neatness, and regularity, and our table was better served, even

when there were only scraps to make up a dinner, than it ever had been. Bertha had the knack of turning everything to account; and many a time when I had thought it impossible we could make a dinner of what appeared bare bones, out of this bareness came forth a repast which I and my husband enjoyed as much as when we began the week with a joint. This very day of our difference, occasioned by my petulance, some such a dinner was to be manufactured, and, as I saw Bertha still in the garden, I conjectured that she meant to leave me to my fate, and an hour previously to the dinner time I went into the kitchen, where I was civilly informed that the dinner was all arranged, and would be ready in time. My temper led me to believe that this time the meal would be a failure. What could be made of a few scraps of meat sticking to a mutton bone? Bridget had asked me for a shilling to pay for something Mrs. Chapman had ordered; but what was this sum to do in finding provision for four persons' dinners. To my astonishment came, first, a pair of soles, which were not so very small, and of which some was left for Bridget. Then came a dish of what looked very like rissoles, only they were egg-shaped, and somewhat larger than an egg; these were savoury, and there was a plentiful supply, and they were accompanied by a dish of nicely mashed and browned potatoes. To this fare was added a rice pudding. I must confess to my bad temper quietly oozing away, though my curiosity was none the less excited.

In the evening, before retiring, I went to Bertha's room as I usually did, and, fearing my courage would fail me, said at once—

"Bertha, in all seriousness, I am come to ask you to give me a few rules for my guidance in housekeeping. I find since you have been with us that our meals cost less, and yet we have greater comfort; that my husband and children are in better health, and that altogether home is pleasanter. I know you are capable of guiding me, for you were differently brought up to myself. My mother did everything—saw to everything; she was, and is, as you know, the sole dependence of the house in its management. Your aunt made you self-helpful, and thus gave you wealth for your lifetime. I am very sorry," I hastily said, for I saw she was about to interrupt me, "that I gave way to temper this morning; but forgive me, and be my best friend."

Bertha looked at me with her eyes full of tears, though smiles dimpled her cheeks.

"Milly, you will do very well," she said. "On my return home I will write all I cannot now say. In three weeks Robert will return, and I must for a time bid you farewell. While I

remain let things go on as they have hitherto done, and when I get back I will write your 'Rules,' and send them."

"But, Bertha, about the nice dinner to-day; how did you manage it? The cost was certainly more than a shilling?"

"Not much," she replied; "the soles were only sixpence the pair, and then I did not give the order to the fishmonger who frequently calls here for orders, but in my walk this morning I met a man with a truck, who had plenty of fish, good and cheap. I stopped and purchased them, he giving me a sheet of paper, and I brought them home. Do not look so aghast; what harm was there in that? I saved sixpence by the bargain, and I injured no one; I should do the same always if necessity required it. A limit of twenty-seven shillings a week is not at all suggestive of pride. The potatoes cost three-halfpence; the meat came off the bone you despised so yesterday when I asserted it could be made to do for a dinner to-day."

"The composition was a mystery to me, and I can get no information from Bridget; so if you will tell me all about that I shall be glad."

"Listen. Every scrap of meat was taken off and chopped very fine. I then measured it in a basin, and took the same quantity of bread-crumbs and a tablespoonful of flour, a little allspice, salt, and half an onion chopped very fine indeed. I mixed the bread-crumbs, flour, and spice together first, then mixed the meat well with it, then sprinkled the onion over, and stirred it all well together; I then stirred in two tablespoonfuls of bacon fat. If you did not make Bridget take care of all the fat which drips from the bacon, I should have been obliged to have minced a rasher or two of that expensive article. With a very little milk I mixed these into balls, then pressed them flat and somewhat egg-shaped; I then rolled each in flour, and dropped them one at a time into a saucepan of boiling dripping, frying them each singly.

"A saucepan of boiling dripping!" I exclaimed: "why not have fried them in the frying-pan?"

"For two reasons. Do you think a *domestique* or cook of my experience could do without a *sauté-pan*? Certainly not. So I improvised one out of a small iron saucepan which Bridget seemed to have discarded as good for nothing but to boil a couple of eggs in; that was one reason. The second was that in your larder I found dripping a scarce article, so that the quantity which would have filled a small frying-pan was not to be had, and if sufficient could have been found it would have been wasted by

evaporation, and been soon burned up ; whereas, in the saucepan, as soon as the fat boiled I threw in a bit of bread ; when it readily browned I drew the saucepan to a moderate heat, where, however, its contents continued to boil. I then dropped in one of my *meat eggs*, so that it was entirely, and somewhat deeply, covered with the fat, and as soon as it was brown I took it up with an egg-slice, allowed the fat to drain from it, and placed it on a pad of paper before the fire, so as to allow it to become quite dry. After the *meat eggs* were all fried, I threw the fat into a basin of hot water and stirred it up well ; to-morrow morning this will be settled in a cake on the top of the water, which I shall take off and lay on some double paper to dry. The impurities the fat has acquired in being used will have sunk to the bottom of the water, and the fat will be ready for use again. The potatoes were mashed singly with a spoon against the side of a basin, a little salt and milk were added, and well mixed. I then buttered another basin, pressed the potatoes into it, set it in the oven for five minutes, then put an old plate on the top of the basin, turned the latter upside down, when the potatoes came in shape on to the plate. I scored them over with a knife, and placed them on a plate in the oven to brown.

“Now, Milly, off with you to bed ; it’s half into the middle of the night ; we shall both lose our hearty sleep.”

“But about the rice pudding?” I answered ; “just tell me how that was made. I never liked rice before.”

“Oh, that is a very simple matter. Bridget bought me a quart of milk, for which she gave threepence ; and excellent milk I must say it was. I took two small pie-dishes, and put into each a very little more than an ounce of rice, about a small tablespoonful ; this I poured hot water on, stirred the rice in it, then drained the water away, and repeated the process again. By doing this all the earthiness, or rawness, which is always attached to rice and barley, is done away with. I then mixed with the rice in each dish a dessertspoonful of sugar and a slight sprinkle of nutmeg. I mixed a pint of milk with the rice in each dish, put a shaving of butter about the size and thinness of a sixpence on the top of each, and baked it in the oven for an hour. But one thing you must remember—that after the dish is once put in the oven its contents must not be again stirred, or, strange to say, there is a likelihood of the milk burning ; and also your judgment must be exercised with regard to the oven’s heat—if it be of too slow and cool a temperature these puddings will take two hours instead of one to cook. The second pudding the children had at one o’clock

after their meat, a few scraps of which I minced very finely, and mixed with some bruised hot potatoes and a little salt; they had each a pretty tolerably thick slice of bread and but a scraping of butter. The pudding added to this made them an excellent dinner. Nearly half the rice was left for Bridget. Now, dear Milly, not another word to-night; away with you; I must lock you out."

"Just tell me why you put such a scrap of butter on the rice? I should fancy you might just as well put none at all."

"You goose! If the butter were not there a thin skin would be on the milk, which would readily burn; you may call the butter oil if you like, for as oil rapidly stills the troubled water, so does the butter allay the ebullition of the milk. And now not another word, but good night, or rather good morning."

Bertha left us in three weeks, and returned to her happy home. Happy, because she made it so; her cheerful temper, healthy tone of thinking, and active usefulness could not but be appreciated. Her husband, in his first marriage, had been termed exacting: now, his wife's prevision left no room for exactions. He had but one fault—like the Israelites of old he was rapidly falling into idolatry, and his wife was the queen of earth and heaven. Her first letters to us were filled with such "joyous romancing," my husband called it "high-flown nonsense," which he could not realize, but which I, in a far-off dream, seemed once to have known.

In a month came my anxiously-looked-for epistle, which was to contain "rules" for my guidance. Yes, mine!—a wife, and mother of two children. Had I ever seen any weakness of purpose in Bertha I should have had no confidence; but in all her management, in all the ordering of her own ways, she was to my human vision perfect: yet it was with trembling that I opened her letter; I felt that in every line I should be condemned—her precepts and my practice I knew would not agree. I need not refer to any note-book to refresh my memory, but, setting aside all the love which welled forth from her heart, and found fitting place in her affectionate words, I give the rules themselves:—

"Early rising—Punctuality—Despatch. Duties to be instantly performed, however in themselves disagreeable.

"In every household, large or small, palace or cot, there must be a *place for everything*; and the mistress must *see that everything be kept in its place*. This matter is generally a prolific source of unpleasantness between domestics and mistress, or housekeeper.

There is rarely to be found any order or plan in untrained servants. Everything is put out of hand at the readiest vacant spot, till confusion everywhere is apparent, unless supervision be exercised day after day; in fact, it is a daily duty, and must be done, despite the tossings of the head, or the thumping of various articles, or the banging of doors by the enraged damsel, who tells you that 'no lady would do such things, and, as I don't seem to give satisfaction, I must go.' In nine cases out of ten this is the result; but either one must be subject to one's servants or one must be mistress. It is in this point that a young and inexperienced mistress breaks down. It is troublesome to be poking everywhere at the risk of stirring up a tempest, but, nevertheless, it must be done; and if the trouble be met every morning it will soon cease to worry the mistress or annoy the servant. To master this most essential duty, one has to conquer one's own unwillingness for the task, as well as indolence—hence the hardship. Some mistresses have a peculiar talent for looking after things; these get well served, and can never be made to understand the natural timidity and shrinking from an act which is felt to be unpleasant; but whether brave or timid, strong or weak, this necessary daily act is one of the first of housekeeping duties."

On reading this I felt self-condemned; I dared not look too closely into a region at the back of the kitchen, which, like Dinah's drawer, was a receptacle for everything, from a nutmeg-grater to candle ends. In fact, had I now commenced my inquisitorial visit, Bridget would have protested by leaving me. So I put this rule on one side, to be acted upon when Bridget's successor should commence her reign. I was found wanting, too, in the next rule.

"Keep a rag-bag, a paper-bag, and a string-bag, all conveniently to hand; a small drawer with nails and tacks, hammer, pincers, and chisel; but all these tools, with the addition of a glue-pot, keep under your own eye, or, like pins and needles, they will nowhere be found when wanted."

Oh, the lectures I have had from Bertha about wasting rags!

"It is a sin," she would say, "to destroy that which our paper-manufacturers are at their wits' ends to obtain. Every particle of rag should be saved."

"Oh, nonsense; it's such a little which I make, it cannot affect the paper question," was my laughing reply.

Bertha looked at me gravely.

"Milly, Milly, a grain of wheat is but small, but numbers feed nations. A pound of rags is little to make in one year; but if every woman saved that weight, would there not be millions of pounds ready to be converted into one of the actual necessities of civilized life? The miser gathers his hoard penny by penny; you save in money, not by the sovereign, but by the shilling, and even by less coin."

Bertha had a most convincing way of putting things. I could not deny her arguments, and therefore set up a rag-bag, and henceforth made it a point of conscience to take care of the scraps. At the end of the year I was astonished at the accumulation which I sold, and transferred the money to my children's money-box. The next rule was—

"Never crowd too much work into a given time, by having three or four rooms cleaned in one day."

Bertha showed me the folly of this proceeding before she left. We had but eight rooms; the two sitting-rooms underwent tolerable cleaning every day, and when one bed-room only was disturbed at a time there were plenty of others for occupation; besides, Bridget could compass this much without effort.

"Never allow dilapidations of linen, or articles of furniture to remain unrepaired; the latter give an untidy appearance to a house, and the former is subversive of all comfort. A pair of stockings may be mended in a quarter of an hour, more or less. This portion of time will scarcely be missed, while to mend two pair will take a longer time than can, perhaps, be spared."

When I read this my eye wandered to my basket of linen—its contents accumulating daily; with a heavy sigh I turned away.

"Four times a year have the beds and mattresses beat and shaken in the open air; once a year, if needed, have the latter re-made. If the bedsteads or boards of the room contain unpleasant intruders, expel them at once by brushing every crevice with strong brine, and let it crystallise on, and so remain, instead of removing it. Be careful in this process to brine the floors before taking the bedsteads to pieces."

Bertha got that hint, I know, from my own mother, who used

to say, in reference to it, that equally simple remedies for many nuisances lay always close at hand, if we had only the wit or knowledge to use them.

“Mark all linen with the *best* marking-ink, when, if it should be obliterated in washing, rest assured that the laundress has used chloride of lime in the operation of cleansing the clothes; the use of soda will only make the ink become blacker.

“Let every article be marked so that it becomes a perpetual register as long as the marks remain; thus—supposing there are six articles—say towels—of a particular pattern, mark your initials, the number 6 *over* these, and the individual number, with the date under the initials; by thus doing, at any time, if you are in doubt about the towels, you can be sure you had six of this particular kind, and you can also directly tell which of the numbers, from 1 to 6, is missing. This manner of registering linen is so correct in its application, and a loss is so readily discovered, that the method should be one of universal practice.

“Rarely trust a servant to send the linen out to be washed, or to count it over on its return, unless you stand by. See the former counted, and set it down yourself; and the same with the clean linen—see that it agrees in number and *kind*; exchanges are often made, and never the better for the worse substitute.

“Every article ordered of your tradesmen write down in their books; never allow an order to be written by a servant.

“Keep all receipts and file them. At the end of each quarter sew them through the centre with strong needle and thread, and tie them; place a strip of paper round each packet, with the date of month and year. At the end of each year place the four packets in one paper, tie it up, and label it with date, &c., and place it in a drawer or other convenient place.

“Enter in a book all the money you receive, also all you spend, and also for what it has been spent, so that at the end of the year you may be enabled to see for what purposes the money has gone.

“Have no ‘sundries,’ which in other words mean ‘forgets.’

“Do not go into debt. Do without even necessities, if so it must be; but avoid debt as you would a mountain that will crush you.

“Have no secrets from your husband, either as to your expenditure or proceedings. If a husband be kept in ignorance of his wife’s carelessness or debt, it is like walking over the concealed crater of a volcano, which may break at any moment and precipitate him beneath.

"It is astonishing how much repose of mind a woman enjoys who places confidence in her husband; but—

"Beware of wearying him with every petty detail of house-keeping—of the shortcomings of the servants, the breakages, and the hundred petty annoyances a woman has to bear who has only limited means at her disposal.

"All bills, rate and tax papers should be laid before him on the day of their arrival. It is possible that he may receive such with pettish words or manner; if it be so, avoid comment or notice of any kind. All will come right at the proper time.

"The best check against unnecessary expenditure is to let the husband see the bills every week, although the wife alone pays them. He will then know the cost of everything, and there can be no blame.

"Never, as a rule, intrust bills to servants to pay; they will sometimes get a percentage from the tradesmen, which the house-keeper pays for—if not in the price of meat, in sundry short weights. This proceeding small incomes cannot stand.*

"Weigh all articles as they come in. It is no use to complain of bare weight, as then there would be always unpleasantness with the tradesmen, which should be avoided; but when an article is flagrantly of short weight, send it back to be verified; never break open the package, or even untie the string with which it may be tied, and even then you may be told your scales are wrong; but if a half-ounce weight be put in one scale, and a letter on the opposite side, this must be a convincing proof that the scales are truly balanced.

"In a large family the waste of pieces of bread is a source of great trouble to a mistress. Servants object to eat the pieces which are so frequently made in the dining-room, either in puddings or any other form; but in a small household like yours, dear Milly, not a scrap must be wasted. See that a second loaf is not cut before the first is consumed; teach the children not to waste the smallest bit; if they have more than they can eat with comfort, let it be made into sop or pudding for them. Never ask a servant to eat this; and at your own table never make unnecessary pieces. When a loaf is reduced to about three inches thick, cut no more slices from it, but cut it downwards, and thus make four square pieces. If yourself and husband particularly like

* 'Please, ma'am, what perkisites do you allow, and do you pay your bills yourself?' is the inquiry frequently made by London servants. "Because if there be no perkisites, and I don't pay the bills, I can't come." This is a recent fact within the writer's knowledge.

crust, and are apt to disfigure the loaf to obtain it, there is no reason for abstaining; for if the remainder, being all crumb, be *pulled* into small pieces, and placed on a dish, *not a tin*, in a quick oven, in ten minutes you will get as much crust as you like. As to stale bread beyond a day old, it is no economy to compel your servants or children to have it, under the idea that less will be consumed, stale bread not being so appetising as new. In nine cases out of ten the servant will burn it or cover it in the dust, or thrust it into the flue of the copper, this being a famous place for burning up all that is disagreeable, and that, too, without the knowledge of the mistress, who never dreams of opening the door of the copper. To give away unseen the stale bread to beggars is the least evil; and the mistress dreads to speak of the consumption, fearing she may be taxed with starving her servants. One day's stale bread is the right time to eat it. Home-made bread is not so dry as baker's bread, hence may be kept longer.

"Dripping is another source of dispute. You will remember these rules are for an expenditure of twenty-seven shillings a week; and I can see you, dear Milly, turn up that little nose of yours at the idea of taking care of the dripping; but fish, chops, and cutlets can be fried as well in dripping as in lard, which is expensive. A free use of it, and that made boiling, is all that is needed. It is using dripping sparingly which makes it burn; a plentiful supply will not even become discoloured. It answers for puddings too, but, if you do not like it for that purpose so well as suet, the latter need not be roasted into dripping when it is sent with the beef. Be careful to see that every superfluous piece be cut off for future use previously to roasting the joint.

"Besides dripping, where bacon is used there remains the fat which drips from it; this is one of the most useful products from cooking. In France, most of the meat and all poultry and game are *larded*; this means drawing with a large needle, into the flesh of fowls or game, strips of bacon which serve to keep the meat moist and impart an agreeable flavour, but of course consumes a great quantity of bacon, which is a certain loss. Butter cannot give the flavour of bacon fat, though it is too often lavishly used in the shape of melted butter as a sauce, and to cover the dryness of the meat. The right way of using it, after it has dripped from the bacon, is to carefully put it away in a preserve pot; it will keep sweet for months; when it is required, spread it with a knife over the poultry, then flour the latter well, and continue to drip it as needed. It is excellent for larding veal, also for every

stuffing instead of suet; the latter, to some people, being very indigestible. It is equal to lard in making pastry, and in fact is one of the most useful of all articles in cooking, and that without reference to income. It is just these two things which general servants of every grade pounce upon as their special 'perquisites,' to be replaced by the mistress by expensive lard. In households where the limited amount of income is not a constant pressure it may rest in the choice of the employer to grant these things, but for twenty-seven or even for eighty-seven shillings a week it is simply preposterous.

"A profuse, unseen, and silent matter of waste, is the use and abuse of coal and cinders. 'She actually looks in the cinder-box,' is the frequent remark of one domestic to another; the careless thoughtless girl little dreaming that cinders are as much fuel as coal, that better fires can be kept up with sifted cinders than with coal alone, and for bedrooms the burning them is safer than coal; there is no danger of their sparking about. If, dear Milly, you wish to do your duty, you will certainly insist upon cinders being daily sifted, and on the fire in your own sitting-room they will be consumed with advantage to yourself, the glow which is thrown out from them soon warming the whole room; and a moderate use of them should be insisted upon in the kitchen. Coals in front of the grate and cinders behind make the best cooking fires. I would just say, with reference to the kitchen fire, no matter what the income may be, if you find your servant make up a fire and in a few minutes begin to break the lumps to pieces, and be frequently stirring it while cooking, that such a servant is not worth salt; she carries the same principle of *waste without profit* into every portion of her management. This rule applies equally to servants living in districts where the coal is cheap, as well as where it is dear. A large fire, unsuitable to the size of the joint, will dry up the juices of the meat, leaving it a hard and indigestible mass; a fire constantly stirred takes all life out of the coals, and powders the meat with dust.

The best arrangement for sifting cinders is a box with rockers, like a cradle; it has a wire sifter inside, fitting like a tray in ordinary boxes, and a cover which closes firmly over the top. The cinders and ashes being put in the tray, the cover is put on; the apparatus can be rocked with the hand or foot for two minutes, then left alone; in a quarter of an hour, if the cover be taken off, the dust will have subsided, the ashes have gone through to the box beneath, leaving the cinders ready for use on the top. This simple machine is strong, inexpensive, very portable, takes up no

room, and efficiently does its work; the only care in purchasing one is to see that the wires of the sifter are stout and strong, otherwise they will give way, and the cinders fall through.

“And now, dear Milly, I come to that very prolific and almost universal source of discomfort—

“SERVANTS.

“It is a fact, however incredible it may seem, that four women out of ten, perhaps a greater number, suffer their servants to become their mistresses—indeed are actually afraid of them. This arises more from the inefficiency of the mistress, which renders her weak and powerless, dependent upon the servant for everything, than from any other cause. My advice to you, Milly, is to learn everything you possibly can belonging to domestic work, even to wash and iron, and never say to Bridget’s successor, whenever she comes to you, ‘I don’t know; do it as you like.’ You must feel that Bridget, with only the little knowledge she possesses, is a very tyrant over you, because she feels that you are dependent upon her for the most trifling service—that all your cooking is guess-work—that in washing clothes you would not know the difference in the result if you were to throw your soiled collars into scalding or tepid water. The strongest mind will ever be the ruler; it is the natural effect of a cause. Bridget would not know how to receive company, or how to play on the piano; and if she, by any change of circumstances, were suddenly called upon to do so, she would run away in affright, and throw herself upon the mercy of any one who could help her in her emergency; but had she such knowledge she would hold her own, fear no one, and be respected.

“It is the ignorance of the mistress which raises the servant into a tyrant. This is one bad state of things; but those who are clever in every domestic detail, and have a limited income, so as to be obliged to make one shilling do the work of two, have their trials. They can find no servant who has experience beyond a smattering knowledge of work or cooking, one who is too old to be taught, or one who knows not the value of any article of consumption. From such domestics the mistress generally obtains the character of being mean, near, and fidgetty, and never keeping her servants long, and thus she gets into bad repute, so that good servants never offer themselves, and she obtains only those who have difficulty in obtaining situations elsewhere—though she has this reward in her daily martyrdom, that at the end of the year

she makes both ends meet. If she conceal these grave evils from her husband she makes his home a happy one, and her house orderly; punctuality is her handmaid, and despatch and comfort results of her management; but there is no denying that, in her daily trials of temper, a more than Spartan courage is hers to enable her to meet her husband in the evening with the winning gracefulness which he loves so well. I am glad, dear Milly, that you now see your husband is one to be thought of, to be welcomed, and all work and complainings to be cast aside to make his home joyful. In the old, old days of courtship, when the loved one was expected, you looked forth many times as if to hasten him on his path, your work was cast aside, and all was unthought of but his presence. I am certain you never dreamt of amusing him with the shortcomings of your servants, except it was to relate some ludicrous incident, and so your conduct then won him. If you now withdraw the screen and show him the skeleton (for in middle-class life, as in any other, there are skeletons in every woman's heart), you stand a chance to make him remember with a sigh that such were not the days of old.

"Hiring Servants.—If you yourself are educated for a wife, not alone for an entanglement in your husband's affairs, you will, in hiring, ask the servant who offers herself what she can do, and how she cooks any particular joint or dish of fish; say first, How do you cook a leg of mutton?" You will be sure to be told, 'I boils it.' You ask, 'But how long will a leg of eight pounds take?' The reply will be an hour and a half, or two hours and a half, or even an hour, and but rarely the right time. 'And how do you fry soles?' 'I fries 'em.' 'Well, but how?' 'I puts a little piece of fat in the pan, and then I wipes 'em dry and puts 'em in.' Now, if you yourself don't know how to do better, how can you tell whether the girl is right or wrong? Supposing you don't know—you take her into the house, and confusion, waste, and dirt are the consequence; but perhaps you are clever, and discover that the girl is teachable and clean—you take her in, instruct her, and make her render you service.

"Avoid hiring one who has lived as kitchen-maid in a superior household—she knows but little more than to waste and to make large fires, the latter being most essential to her importance, and has a soul above saving dripping, excepting for her own purposes. There is one thing I would mention. I have found low-classed London servants to have a perfect knowledge of the price of dripping; therefore they will use for the same purpose three or four times over that in which fish has been fried. Clean dripping,

fresh from the meat, they can get fivepence a pound for; hence, for themselves they have learned to save, and can do so for a mistress if they choose, but, unfortunately, they will not. If, when hiring, it is mentioned that to sell grease is not permitted, she will understand her position, and, if found doing so, the only remedy is to discharge her.

“Never attempt to hire a servant who professes to be able to do everything, and who tells you she ‘doesn’t like a mistress to come into the kitchen.’ Be assured she knows nothing, and will endeavour to upset all your household arrangements and plans. She is one also who is prompt at giving notice.

“Have nothing to say to her who asks you if this or that is to be done; one who has never cleaned a knife or boot, ‘had no call to do sich things, havin’ been always brought up respectable.’ Hire no girl who speaks ill of her former mistress, or who evinces a readiness to betray the affairs of the family.”

It is all very well for Bertha to write thus; but where shall I find a servant at all? I mentally asked. In London a good general servant is not to be had for ten pounds a year; so Mrs. York, a lady who lives near, tells me, and she never exceeds eight pounds; but then, certainly, she is clever, and understands all the minutiae of cooking and everything else. I wonder who Mrs. York could have been, and what was her occupation before marriage, for she sings and plays, draws, and teaches her servants to cook and to wash, and she makes her own dresses and irons them; but then her husband has only a hundred and twenty pounds a year, out of which he has managed to insure his life for two hundred pounds. I think I must take a lesson from her book when Bridget goes, and for the moment I wondered if the latter and I should go on together to the end. So I reverted to Bertha’s “rules”—

“*Respecting a Servant’s Character.*—Upon no pretext or pretence take one without a character for honesty and civility. Lay not too much stress on anything else: what may be cleanliness in one house may not be thought so in another. Do not take a written character: the appearance of the mistress and the house will go far to assist your judgment as to the servant. Distrust equally a very good or very bad character, and do not take a servant who has lived years in a place: be assured she will be mentally making disagreeable comparisons between yours and the family she has left, and be so settled into their ways that she will not change to yours. Besides, depend upon it she has been tolerated in many

shortcomings, for which her plea of long service has been sufficient, or she would not have been discharged.

"Do not, Milly, think I am hard in writing all this; I only bring to your notice facts of my own and my aunt's experience. I can give you no certain rules by which you should be bound in hiring a servant, as there must be many exceptions, and with all possible care much disappointment on both sides will doubtless ensue, which the mistress at least must patiently bear.

"When a servant first commences her duties, the greatest forbearance must be exercised by the mistress, consistent with her spoken orders or directions. Avoid telling too much at once; one thing only at a time; but trust not that it will be performed to your satisfaction unless you see that it is so. I was once staying in apartments with a most amiable lady of fifteen hundred a year income; one day she said, 'I have asked Margaret to light the fire in my bedroom at seven this evening; I wonder if she has done it?' and she rose to leave the room. 'Oh!' said I, 'you may be sure she has.' 'I am not sure at all,' she laughingly replied; 'my experience has been this: the first is, to do it yourself, and, failing this, to see that it be done. The latter is less trouble than to trust and reap disappointment.' Another friend, whom I know to be the best manager of a servant I have ever met with, mentions that, in her hiring, for one month she accompanies her maid every day through all her duties, and until the girl is perfect in the ways of her mistress and in the manner of doing the work. If this plan were generally adopted, with the few exceptions which must necessarily exist, there would be a great degree of comfort where now there is utter discomfort; but, of course, this is premising that the mistress is herself properly educated in her duties; otherwise she cannot teach. The remedy for the universal outcry respecting bad servants is in the hands of the mistresses; *they must first be themselves taught, then teach their domestics.*

"There is always a certain number of good servants to be found, but they rarely fall to the lot of middle-class people, and when discovered are cherished beyond price, so that where limited incomes cannot be stretched they are to the majority unattainable.

"Be careful to say but little in giving your orders to domestics; that little must be said in all kindness, but with firmness.

"Encourage in them no tattling about others' affairs, but in every other respect act as a parent to them, feeling for their pain, alleviating it as much as possible, listening to the details of their families, and—in young girls especially—to every particular

respecting their lovers ; guide them, appeal to the feelings, constantly and practically place before them the purport of the Divine maxim, 'Do as you would be done by.' If they waste, say, 'Would you have done this if you had to purchase these things?' If they tell untruths, endeavour to reason with them, to show the utter impolicy, the uselessness of their fraud—that confidence cannot be given where such a tendency exists ; and though there is no chance that even this care and interest will make them one whit better, still *your duty* must be performed, whatever they leave undone.

"In giving orders care must be taken that they are practicable ; otherwise a girl will be mentally defiant, and soon show it openly. To overwork a girl is cruel, whether it arises from thoughtlessness or design. Housekeeping really becomes a science when every nerve and thought are exerted in adapting the means to the end. There are many ways in which a mistress may quietly assist her domestic, without the latter really observing it. It is a bad plan to commence with calling a girl's attention to the fact that you are helping her ; she will then neglect her work and depend upon you, at a time, perhaps, when it may be inconvenient. Every day should have its portion of work performed, so that at the end of the week the whole house will have been cleaned through. I know you have the habit of rising early, without which I should be hopeless of giving you help. It is altogether a bad plan to call a servant ; she will then depend upon you, and you will become her slave. The habit of early rising will grow, and she will soon fall into it.

"As you dress your children yourself, and do not trouble Bridget in this matter, I have nothing to say about it, excepting that if you did not you would be compelled to keep another girl, as Bridget's plan is mine also, of cleaning the knives, boots, two sitting-rooms, and passages before eight o'clock. 'Tis true your little feather brush and silken duster are requisite in both rooms ; but this work, I am sure, does not redden your hands or require you to put on an especial ugly wrap for the occasion. I have admired you for this, and thought the children on the rug, crowing with delight to see mamma flitting here and there, and chirping, and chatting, and crowing with them, as perfect a picture as one would desire. In such moments I have envied you—envied you the bliss of your little ones. This is a subject I resolutely set my face against dwelling upon ; so to continue. I wish that in the few moments you are often waiting for Fred you would decide upon the dinner arrangements for the day, and write them down

on a strip of paper. 'Tis true your dishes may be few in number, and very simple, and Bridget certainly always recollects; but the time may come when it will be Bridget no longer, and in the worry of change and a new face you will be sadly perplexed to recollect even what you intended for dinner. Just write your bill of fare for every day thus. Suppose we begin with Sunday—dinner for this day, of course, being arranged on the day previous:—

SUNDAY.

Roast beef.
Yorkshire pudding.
Potatoes.
Horseradish sauce.
A tart or pudding.

MONDAY.

Cold beef.
Roasted potatoes.
Salad, dressed.
Whole rice pudding without eggs.

To order or get.

Lettuce, &c.
Potatoes.

TUESDAY.

Pea soup.
Minced beef, or if the joint was a sirloin, then the upper part will have been salted, and so can remain another day.

Mashed parsnips.
Fried potatoes.
Apple fritters without eggs.

To order or get.

Split peas.
Potatoes.
Apples.
Parsnips.

WEDNESDAY.

Sole, or other fish.
Melted butter, or
Anchovy sauce.
Two mutton cutlets.
Potatoes.

To order or get.

Fish.
Cutlets.
Potatoes.

THURSDAY,

Soup made from bones of beef, and thickened with Scotch barley.
The top of the beef that was salted stewed with carrots, and an onion with four cloves inserted.

Potatoes.

To order or get.

Scotch barley.
Potatoes.
Onions.
Carrots.

FRIDAY.

Liver and bacon.
Spinach and poached eggs, or
Stewed neck of mutton.
Potatoes and turnips.

SATURDAY.

Stewed steak.
Boiled onions.
Potatoes.
Rhubarb tart.

SUNDAY.

Roast fillet of mutton.
Greens.
Potatoes,
Fruit pudding, or
Jam roll.

“It is economical to have a whole leg of mutton, and have it cut in half, so as to roast one end and boil the other, and by these means a roast and cold, boiled and minced, may be obtained, also a soup.

“Remember every day to write down your orders, never to give them *only* verbally to a servant, although it will be necessary to read them to her as well as to give her the written instructions.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE SICKNESS OF BERTHA'S STEP-SON—A VISIT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—HOW TO KEEP BUTTER AND WATER COOL.

BERTHA CHAPMAN'S “rules” suddenly came to an end, for in a few lines she informed me that anything further must be delayed to a future time, her step-son Robert having met with an accident which had caused concussion of the brain. My heart bled for the tortured father; for this only son was the crowning blessing of his life. It need scarcely be told how my heart sympathised with Bertha and her husband in their deep grief. “There was no hope,” were the last words of her letter. After this I daily looked for tidings of Robert's death, but none came. “He lingers on unconscious of us all,” was the last news.

A lady, her husband, and children had come to reside near us. She called one morning, and I found her extremely pleasant and agreeable. I did not return her call, till one evening Fred and I, in passing her house, were greeted with a friendly nod as she and her husband were just entering their door. She came towards us, and insisted upon our joining them. My husband hated fuss, so I thought it best at once to comply. An hour soon passed in pleasant conversation, for both Mr. and Mrs. Gray were well informed. Everything in the furnishing of the rooms appeared neat, some even elegant, and all bore traces of a refinement much above the style of house they were inhabiting. Presently the folding doors of the two small rooms were thrown open, and a charmingly laid-out supper appeared. There was a well-dressed lobster salad, the remains of a cold joint, bread, butter, and cheese; and on the centre of the table stood a small spreading basket of freshly-gathered roses and mignonette, perfuming the whole atmosphere with their fragrance. We were overpowered with the hospitality of our kind friends, and consented to share what they termed their usual evening meal.

I looked with more of curiosity than of appetite upon the tempting repast thus so pleasantly displayed. There were no expensive articles of food; lobsters and lettuces were at their cheapest. But what was it that made the whole affair look as if it had been spread for royalty? A second glance was sufficient. The tablecloth, although not spotless, looked nearly so. Each fold of the damask as it had been sent from the laundress had been carefully kept; no roughness appeared on its surface, and it was only upon near examination one could discover that it had done duty for perhaps two days or more. The silver, if silver it was, sparkled in its brightness; the glasses were clear and thin, and the knives shone with undimmed lustre. All this, with the fragrant mignonette and many-tinted roses, gave an indescribable charm to the simple repast. Visions of my own neglect in these apparently trifling but really important matters rose up as accusers, and I determined to have no more carelessness in this respect. Soon after we commenced supper wine was introduced; my husband gave me a glance, which I well understood. It was sherry, of a very indifferent quality, but served in an exquisitely cut decanter. Without entering into further particulars, I need only say we spent a very pleasant evening, and mutual civilities having passed, we returned home. During our walk I said—

“The evening has been a pleasant one; but I fear we must give up visiting Mrs. Gray. You know we cannot afford wine; besides, I am too proud to place wine of indifferent quality before our guests. I hate shams, and this is one of them; but how shall we manage about the return visit?”

“It is just this which is perplexing me,” replied my husband; “it so happens that I know Bertie Adams, who filled the situation Mr. Gray is now in, and I know that he had barely two hundred a year. Possibly these people may have other means. However, be that as it might, we cannot give lobster salads and sherry for supper; so I suppose we must fight shy.”

“That will not do, at all events, till we have invited them back. If Bertha were here, I know what she would say and do, and I feel as if I had gained some courage from thinking of her. She hates all subterfuge—so do I, and it will be better to commence our intercourse in the same way we should be compelled to continue it. We dine late, and do not take suppers. If they come to us, it must be to our tea, and this meal must be the extent of our hospitality.”

“Well, little one, I don’t see what else we can offer them if we mean to be honest. Twenty-seven shillings a week won’t go far

in refreshments for visitors, and ourselves to live out of it. Perhaps we had better give it up."

"I do not quite like to do this," I replied. "Mrs. Gray is evidently a gentlewoman, and has been accustomed to something more than her present means. I wonder how she manages?"

"Never mind how she manages, so that we keep straight," replied my husband somewhat pettishly.

No more was then said upon what was evidently a sore subject. Two or three weeks passed on, during which time I constantly bore in mind the brightness of the silver, the uncreased cloth, and the flowers, and the general effect of the pleasant repast we had enjoyed. This scene was so ever present to my vision that every day I endeavoured to produce, not only on my table but in the decorations of the room, a similar effect, and in a great measure I succeeded; so that, when Mr. and Mrs. Gray called as we were sitting down to tea, my husband, who had hitherto appeared unobservant, looked with a pleased smile on the general arrangements. The tea-pot—albeit not silver nor silver-plated—and the tea-spoons and toast-rack looked their brightest; and though I had but few roses, and only flowers of the commonest kind, still there they were, and arranged, as Mr. Gray said, like a picture.

"You have exquisite taste in grouping flowers, Mrs. Allison; you are an artist, I fancy," he continued.

"If you mean that I appreciate an artistic design or a good painting, then you are correct; but I do not paint nor sketch."

"I mean that you have blended the colours of these flowers so well, and contrasted their several tints with such appropriate foliage, that I fancied you must have an artist's talent. Why, positively, you have made a simple dinner dish do duty for a costlier vase, and with capital effect. That exquisite outer border of fern leaves, then the inward one of mignonette, then the scarlet geranium, and finally the white roses. Why, the arrangement is quite a study. You have them in wet sand, of course?"

"No; not sand. Simple water, with morsels of moss stuffed in to keep the blooms upright, is all I use. I also put in various places small pieces of charcoal, which prevents all decaying or earthy smell."

"Your plan is an excellent one; I shall adopt it," said Mrs. Gray; "and I also admire your plan of placing mignonette and scarlet geraniums in these china saucers; they are infinitely prettier than more costly appliances, which keep one in a perpetual fidget lest they should get broken."

"I scarcely know whether I may be permitted to offer you tea;

but if you will join us we shall be pleased," I said with some nervousness.

Our friends were delighted, or appeared to be so ; and certainly an hour or two passed away pleasantly enough ; then Mr. and Mrs. Gray left. We had neither introduced wine nor spirits, nor had other amusement than conversation.

A fortnight elapsed, our friends again called, and I was upon the point of promising to spend the following evening with them, when my husband said—

"Pardon me for a moment, Milly. We shall be very glad to retain your friendship, Mr. Gray ; but our income is evidently so much less than yours that we should not feel comfortable to partake of your hospitality, for we cannot offer you an equivalent in return, and so we will be very friendly without a closer intercourse. I beseech you to excuse my seeming abruptness—almost incivility, but we can only afford to visit on such terms as will not encroach in a material degree upon our very limited income."

"What do you mean, Allison ? You have supped with us but once. What did we give you more than we have received from you ? Indeed, I feel we are greatly your debtors for your extremely pleasant society."

"It is kind of you to say this ; but still I feel there is a bar to hospitality. You can afford to place wine and knick-knacks before your friends, which we cannot do, and therefore cannot accept from them. It is best to summon courage, and speak out. I fear my little wife and myself must depend on ourselves alone for society. Everywhere I see a tendency to luxury which we dare not imitate, inasmuch as debt looms in the distance. So, my good friends, we will meet with pleasure, but that is all."

I felt as if I should have sunk with confusion at this speech, though I could not but know that my husband was right, and that a higher feeling of respect stole over me at his bravery ; for one can often meet disaster with equanimity, while one cannot step aside from conventional rules without trembling, however much that step may be necessary.

Mr. Gray at first appeared astonished, while his wife looked apparently as if she coincided with all she had heard, and when Fred ceased to speak, she hastily said—

"Mr. Allison, you are right. We can no more afford wine or spirits than you can ; indeed, I question if our income is as large as yours, and I know that this matter of wine in our expenditure makes no small item in our accounts, but on the contrary is somewhat heavy to meet. Both Mr. Gray and myself came from a

home where good wine was always one of the necessities of our family; and, unfortunately, if we did not think it one of our own necessities, we imagined it indispensable to set it before our guests; but we have never been able to compass the wine of our home, and I have always thought it mean to set before people that kind which our not plethoric purse compelled us to do, and I thank you very very much for the lesson you have given us."

Mr. Gray held out his hand.

"Very well, old fellow; I thank you heartily. Do not fancy you have got rid of us."

"Nor do I wish that; indeed, I shall be very grateful to both of you if you will accept the hospitality we can give with a welcome which could not otherwise be accorded, and give us in return your pleasant society."

"But you don't mean to say you won't come to our house at all?"

"No, that is not my meaning; we will come as often as you want us, but not always to eat and drink."

And thus we secured two of the most valuable friends we ever had. The Grays admired my husband's moral courage, and thought highly of him; the opinion thus formed was of infinite service to us on one eventful occasion, the details of which I need not enter into here. Pleasantly time passed on. Mrs. Gray had no children, and, as she became devoted to mine, spent more time at our house than would otherwise have been the case. I found so much pleasure in receiving her, as there was no expense attending it; nor did I hesitate to go to her house as frequently as I felt inclined. Indeed, my husband's moral courage had given me strength to apply his principle of abstaining from false appearances, that I felt losing my self-respect if I ever attempted a sham. Twenty-seven shillings a week—these words seemed to be endowed with vitality; they were ever palpably rising before me whenever I was tempted to indulge in petty extravagances—whenever I desired to put on an importance not warranted by my income; in the words of the day, "doing the grand." All who marry upon £200 per annum must be educated for such a limit, or must educate themselves for it; and they may be very happy, perhaps happier than with £2000 per annum. They must be early risers, methodical managers, have an intimate knowledge of wholesome cookery and useful needlework; must be economical of time, careful of waste pieces, of dripping, of suet, of bones, and of cinders, which are all of the greatest use in household management, which must be had, and, if not cared for, will be

found expensive articles to buy—so much so that three hundred a year income will not suffice to replace the deficiency.

Some housekeepers say they find it a better plan to pay for everything as it comes in from the different tradesmen; others prefer to buy at once sufficient of every article to make a store. The proverb, "A store is no sore," is in one sense pernicious; but, as proverbs cut both ways, there may be many instances, no doubt, where a store has proved a god-send, but in housekeeping matters upon twenty-seven shillings a week a store is an evil, from there being no check upon the consumption. My own plan was always to have a book from every tradesman who supplied my wants, in which once a week I entered all I required, and only sufficient for the week's consumption—tea, sugar, coffee, and bacon; butter, if the grocer supplied me (and he generally did), I had in twice a week. Bridget had her half-pound weekly. This in price was nearly the same as that for our own consumption; but as she was never very careful whether she cut it with a clean knife, or kept it melting in the kitchen under the influence of the fire and gas, it was not very palatable when it made its appearance at our table; hence I chose that our butter should be kept distinct, and, indeed, I always had it under my own management, both in winter and summer. In the latter, the hot weather melted away poor Bridget's into oil, and she never could be made "to fuss as missis do," for her own comforts. I never could teach her the principle of how butter or water could be kept cool by evaporation; not that I ever mentioned such a long word to her, for she would have fancied it some magical talisman which operated upon the butter, instead of the result being the exercise of her own common sense.

"Now, missis, how can that drop o' water make the butter hard?" was her question one day, when she saw me put a half-pound of butter into our glass butter-dish.

"I will tell you, if you will but observe, Bridget."

"I do observe ye every day, m'm, but I'm none the wiser."

"Well, watch me once again. You see I put about half a teacupful of cold water into this soup-plate; standing in this is the butter-dish containing the butter."

"Shure, then, why don't you put the cowl'd water on the butter?"

"That must never be, because the water would soon get warm from the hot air; but I keep the hot air off by dipping this old table-napkin in water, placing it over the butter dish, letting the whole of the other portion of the napkin be tucked into the water

in the soup-plate ; then you see the water rises continually over the napkin, making the air which surrounds the butter cool instead of hot."

"Shure it's you is the clever one ; but it's a terrible sight o' trouble, though the butter's as hard as a flint, an' it keeps swate, too."

"It's no trouble at all, Bridget, once a day to give fresh water, twice a week to scald the napkin and the butter-dish with boiling water ; then, when cold, let both stay in cold water for an hour. And see the comfort you have."

"An' that's thrue for you. If I'd only been trained I might ha' been as clever as yourself. An' what's the use of all that melted saltpetre and salt round the filter ? Won't water do for that as well ?"

"No ; because the filter is somewhat thicker than this table-napkin, and the coldness of water is not sufficient. So you see I melt a handful of salt and a tablespoonful of saltpetre in a quart of water, place it in this shallow pan, then stand the filter in it ; dip a wet cloth in water, then place it over the filter so that the edges of the cloth shall lie in the mixture, and all I have to do for a month is to renew the water in the pan every day, when you know the water which is daily put into the filter is as cool as ice."

"But why do you have the filter put in a draught ?"

"Because the air in a draught is cooler, and as constantly as the surface of the wet cloth is dried by the surrounding air, the sides of the cloth being laid in the mixture causes the moisture to ascend, and thus prevents the hot air from approaching the filter. Now, Bridget, if you ever marry, and wish to make the water cool for your family to drink, you need not have a filter. Just fill a pitcher with cold water ; place the pitcher in a basin which has water in it ; wring out a clean cloth in cold water ; cover over the pitcher with the cloth, taking care that all the edges of the cloth are tucked into the basin in which you have stood the pitcher, and you need not trouble yourself more. In two hours the water will be deliciously cool."

"'Tis thrue, m'm, but I can't tell why it should be cowl'd. An' I can't tell to this day why, when I lived at Dr. Howton's, he should do such a funny thing as this:—One of the children was very weakly an' ricketty, an' used to have swellings come out in its neck, an' its little ankles used to give way. Well, every night an' morning this child used to be bathed, and shure the doctor made the bath jist like this:—We had two long, narrow

washing tubs ; both used to be nearly filled every day with cold water ; he would have rain-water when 'twas to be had, an' if we couldn't git it we jist had t'other.

"The fun of it was he would have both these baths placed in the sun, an' in the bottom of each he had more than a poun' of roll brimstone an' a teacupful of bay-salt mixed with it ; well, this stood in 'the sun all day, an' before the sun set one bath was brought in, an' t'other was left out 'an was covered over with a deal board which fitted nicely on the top. The one we brought in we put a quart of boiling water into, an' then the child went in of his own accord, for the doctor would throw in some bits o' toys like goold, and so the child wanted to fetch 'em out.

"He used to be kep' in for five minutes, the doctor splashing him about an' playing wi' him ; he would never let the child be still a minnit. Then we tuk him up and wiped him wi' very soft cloths, put on his little flannel gown, and then the doctor rubbed his ankles very gently, an' the great lump in his neck, an' I put him to bed an' he slep' all night. An' shure, a'most afore daylight, the doctor called out, 'Bridget, put the bath out in the sun an' take off the cover ;' so down I went an' out of doors an' done jist as he bid me, an' so my moving about woke up the little one (for he slep' in a crib by my side), an' when I come back I gave him a bit o' bread and butter an' a cup o' swate milk, which I always tuk up the night afore, an' then the little fellow would sleep on till eight o'clock, when we brought in t'other bath an' done jist the same as we did the night afore. An' instead of his flannel gown a-top of his other clothes, he had a grey woollen dress, which was as thin as flannel. Old nurse said 'twas flannel, for master had it dyed a-purpose to make the child coats. An' the funniest thing of all was that the child had, always cold milk and water to drink ; 'twas fresh every day, but in the bottom of the jug there was always a leetle bit o' roll brimstone. After a while this brimstone was cracked with a hammer, an' maister said all the vartues come out of it again.

"He had some quare notions the maister had, for cook had to boil down some shin o' beef to make strong clear beef jelly, so that you could cut it with a spoon, and the child ate two table-spoonfuls every day, mixed in with his mate and bread, for the little sick one couldn't ate much mate, an' so he was made to nourish hissself another way."

"Did the child get well, Bridget?" I asked.

Yes that he did, an' he's as fine a boy as ever walked. Nurse

said 'twarn't maister's own child, and that there was lots o' money dependin' upon his life ; and when he comes into his fortin, I'm shure he ought to give the maister a big share for all the care he took o' him. I did hear that his mother was a gran' lady, an' the doctor fell in love wi' her, but he never tould her—so 'tis said ; an' yet, just before she died, she said that if Dr. Howton took her child he would save his life—an' shure he did, be the blessing o' God."

"I should think the plan he adopted a very sensible one. I am at a loss to know myself why the baths were placed in the sun. Did you break brimstone and bay-salt every day in the baths ?"

"Oh, no; fresh bay-salt was put in twice a week, and then the brimstone was jist cracked in a fresh place ; so that every day, after the boy was bathed an' the water had settled, it was jist thrown away, all but a little above the brimstone, an' then both baths was left in the sun for three hours, then they were half filled wi' water, and left till a little before the sun set ; one of 'em was brought in, an' t'other was covered up."

"But how did you manage in the winter, when there was but little sun ?" I asked.

"Well, the tubs were put out jist the same, only we didn't put quite so much water in 'em, an' we put a little more bay-salt, and a little hotter water in before the child went in. The doctor said the boy's narves were never to be shook on a sudden, and we were never even in fun to frighten him ; but he didn't grow up a coward for all that."

"I have often thought you had a wonderful way with children, Bridget ; you would make a capital nurse." Bridget coloured, and, looking down shyly, said—

"If you please, m'm, I'm going to be bould enough to tell you a bit of a sacret. Patrick, m'm, asked me last Sunday to have our names called in church."

"What ! to be married ?" I asked in dismay.

"If you please, m'm," answered Bridget, curling up her apron and looking down, and colouring up to her eyes.

"But, Bridget, you are so much older than he is."

"Shure, an' it's the better wife I'll make him than one of them spalpeens that's got a bunch of garden stuff on their heads—a bonnet I 'spose they call 'em—and barrel-hoops round their gowns which sweep up all the muck o' the streets."

Bridget's last remark was unanswerable, and I left her without another word, so vexed was I at this announcement.

Two months passed away, and Bridget had left me ; her place filled—but, alas ! not supplied. Now, indeed, my housekeeping troubles began. I had obtained an excellent character with the new girl, which proved a fallacy ; her only good point was honesty ; otherwise she was dirty, careless, and slow—so slow that it could be called nothing else than idleness. Again and again I changed my damsels, all to no purpose. Well, thought I, I must turn servant myself : this can never go on. I shall get a bad name in the neighbourhood ; besides, the plan of changing began to get expensive. Twenty-seven shillings a week !—oh, how this galled me ! but now I see that had I had fifty shillings a week the result would have been the same. I had trusted implicitly to Bridget in everything. Did my husband want breakfast an hour earlier, Bridget had it ready. Did he want an egg poached, how nicely it came with the yellow just blushing through its dainty envelope of snowy white ! The toast, which under Bridget's reign was crisp as the freshest biscuit, under the new régime was converted into slices of leather. All the little items which went to make up a whole of comfort had suddenly vanished. The knives were dim, the cloth was tumbled, the plates were rough and smeared, the water had never boiled, and so the first miserable meal of the day passed over. Others followed ; the meat was sodden and peppered with coal-dust ; the greens were rusty, and potatoes watery ; and as for punctuality, not one of my hired hindrances knew what it meant.

I wrote to Bertha to send me a servant. Her reply was—

“Get an active girl, and teach her yourself, dear Milly ; be independent. I know not where to find you an experienced woman like Bridget, who has grown into your ways ; but take some likely young girl of eighteen, teach her all you know, and possibly you may learn much from her ; for a month or two be with her in the kitchen from early morning till late. But, alas ! I forgot that you are not accomplished enough yourself to bake toast or poach an egg—both delicate operations, by the way, worthy the genius of an artiste.

“Just ask your husband to let you come here with the children for a month, or discharge your present servant, and let Bridget and Patrick keep house till you return. You will gain some experience with me which you cannot obtain at home.”

The affair was soon settled ; a week found me under Bertha's hospitable roof, saddened though it was by the almost imbecility of Robert, who had never recovered from his fall, and daily became more childish. In vain the best medical advice had been

obtained—it was useless, and each week found him less able to move about, less capable of understanding or of recognizing his friends. Then it was that Bertha shone out as true woman—the consoler of her husband—the nurse of the afflicted. With what untiring patience did she seek to amuse him, to tempt his appetite, to elicit one glimmering of sense, but without avail! How watchful was her love—how untiring her interest! Had his appetite failed at breakfast, in an hour she came with some restorative, prepared by her own hands, for his sustenance. How I envied her the domestic knowledge she possessed! How, from seeing the comfort she everywhere scattered around her, I determined, come what would, to imitate her!

After breakfast on the morning succeeding my arrival, “Milly,” said Bertha, “come with me into the kitchen, and see how I manage for the day. Old cook has gone home for a holiday, and will not return for three weeks; she has gone to Scotland. I have only her niece to act as cook, and her experience is not great, though she is not so very young. Indeed, I very much fear that I must be the ‘guiding star’ for to-day’s luncheon and dinner, if one can judge from her attempts of yesterday.”

“What is that list you have in your hand?” I asked.

“That is simply my bill of fare for the day, with the tradesmen’s orders.”

“Allow me to look,” said I.

“Certainly; read it aloud,” she replied.

“Salmon and anchovy sauce; roast lamb, mint sauce; ducks, peas, potatoes; cherry tart; corn-flour pudding.

“*To order*:—Fishmonger—Two and a half pounds of salmon. Butcher—Shoulder of lamb, four pounds. Poulterer—Two ducks. Greengrocer—A quart of shelled peas, two pounds of new potatoes, one pound of cherries.”

“How very exact you are respecting the weight and measure!” said I.

“This, of course, a good housekeeper will always be,” she replied.

“But how can you tell how much people will eat? For instance, why do you say two and a half pounds of salmon? How many persons will dine off that to-day?”

“Only four; but I find that frequently we have a visitor, who comes from a long distance, and generally stays to dinner. I never like to be taken unprepared, for it is a mile and a half from hence to the shops in the village. I always calculate half a pound of fish, such as salmon, cod, or turbot, to each person—it

will not weigh so much when cooked. Soles, of course, I calculate as to their thickness; but I always choose a sole which, when the head and extremity of tail are cut off at the table, shall be divided into two portions, consequently, we should but require one pair if we were going to have them to-day. Sometimes I have one very thick fish, and divide it into three pieces before it is fried, and this is a very nice way of cooking them, or thick soles filleted—that is, the bones taken out—are very nice. You are sure to be right if you calculate in this manner.”

“Well, then, as to the meat; how can you tell how much will be eaten of this?”

“I do not usually calculate so closely respecting meat unless there are six or nine people to partake of it. In the latter case, I should reckon a pound of meat to each person; not that any one would eat a pound or half a pound, but you must consider that before the meat comes to the table, in addition to the bone of the joint, there are always superfluous fat, superfluous bits, outsides, and waste by cooking; all this must be taken into consideration. For instance, take a sirloin of beef weighing ten pounds, just such as the butcher usually sends; take from this the suet, the thin portion of the end (which I consider a waste to roast, as it will make a second dish for the next day), you will find the joint not too much to place before eight persons, although you may have a second dish of poultry, or cutlet, or mince, or chops. I am now speaking of homely family dinners, not company dinners: these are quite different affairs.”

“I don’t want to know about company dinners,” said I. “Twenty-seven shillings a week won’t entertain much company.”

“You speak contemptuously of a sum which thousands have not, and thousands more have to provide every necessary of life with, which hardship you have not to endure.”

“I am your pupil,” was my reply; “so pray go on.”

“What is the next thing you wish to know?”

“Simply why you order the peas to come ready shelled instead of shelling them at home?”

“If all my servants were in their places, I should infinitely prefer to have them shelled at home,—for this reason, that if you purchase them out of the pod the shellers have selected the largest pods irrespective of their age; consequently the peas are almost invariably old; and as I object very much to charwomen’s assistance, I save my servants—when I have but two—all trouble that I can. Of course I could not shell them myself, as I am liable to interruption every moment from some visitor; therefore I

employ the greengrocer, who usually charges threepence a peck for shelling, and a peck should yield a quart of peas, when they are in full season."

"I didn't know that before; and, like Captain Cuttle, I'll 'make a note of it.' And you are going to have cherry tart to-day—you are a happy woman to be able to have such expensive treats. Why, I was asked an extravagant price for a pound before I left home."

"These were foreign cherries, and not fit for baking. Our own, as you perceive, are not nearly ripe; but these cherries are brought here from the village of Churchill, or from Cornwall; we buy them now at eightpence a pound; and these mixed with rhubarb cut very small, make a tart not to be distinguished from one made of all cherries."

"Rhubarb?" said I, much in the tone that the old dame answered her husband when he asked, "Whose boots may these be?"

"Yes, rhubarb. I'll tell you a secret about that. You must allow that it is very wholesome; however, I know it to be such. Well, then, understand that rhubarb takes all flavours, but gives none, and, therefore, helps to make up a deficiency of more costly material. For instance, if you desire to make a large tart and have only half a pint of raspberries to make it with, how would you manage it? Raspberries are expensive to buy, and go no way."

"Ah, well, I can't tell; I must go without it, I suppose."

"Not so; you have only to mince the rhubarb very small, wash it well before, and particularly after mincing; stir up the sugar with it, and bake it till soft; then, when *cold*, stir in your raspberries, make your tart, and bake it only sufficiently long to cook the paste. The raspberries are sure to be dressed enough. My aunt used to say there were many contrivances which expensive cooks made their employers pay for, but never had. Many things can be made from rhubarb of which an inexperienced person would never dream. Cider was at one time the basis of artificial wine; rhubarb answers better. Rhubarb makes a good imitation hock, moselle, and champagne, both still and sparkling, and from it can also be made an excellent imitation of sherry, to which sweet almonds, with a few bitter ones, would impart a 'nutty flavour.'

"From rhubarb you may make what would be taken for 'preserved ginger,' a simple, inexpensive, and pleasant addition to the dessert. You may give it a fine name, and flavour it with

orange, with lemon or almond flavouring, and present it as a Chinese or Japanese novelty.

"You may boil rhubarb and black currants together till you have extracted the juice from both; then strain it through two sieves of a different fineness; then boil it with its weight in sugar, and you have black currant jelly. Flavour the simple juice of rhubarb with lemon peel and stick cinnamon, and you have quince jelly. Flavour it slightly with lemon and almond flavouring, and you have apple jelly.

"Boil the simple juice with sugar only, and a small portion of treacle, till it is dark and thick, and you have the best colouring imaginable for gravies and soups.

"Again, boil the juice with an equal quantity of loaf sugar and some red currants; strain it, and when boiling drop in singly some ripe strawberries, and a more delicious addition to dessert in winter cannot be put on the table. In fact, the capabilities of rhubarb are so various that they can scarcely be enumerated.

"There are a few things you must observe; an important one is, for mixing with any fruit, the juice must be first extracted by boiling without sugar, and then be strained. This is now the basis or foundation upon which to build other flavours, other deceptions, for the admixture is no less; but, unlike most others, the deceit is incapable of being discovered."

"But how can you make artificial ginger?" I asked; "for prepared ginger is a weakness of mine."

"Milly, you had better write down the instructions I give you, they may be of use to you some day; my aunt collected them with great care, and I think I have somewhat improved upon them, because I purpose giving you the reasons why such and such directions are to be observed; and this information my own experience has taught me."

"Well, then, about the ginger?"

"Boil down a sufficient quantity of rhubarb till the juice is tolerably clear, and the rhubarb is separated into fibre; then strain it through a flannel bag, pointed at one end as jelly-bags usually are. I have found it better for the purpose to make first a Berlin canvas bag, pointed at one end like a funnel, then a few inches below this hang the jelly-bag; the canvas facilitates the running through. While this process is going on, or at the commencement of the work, put in a *caper bottle* (because it has a wide mouth and is ready to hand) two ounces of raw ginger cut into thin slices; fill up the bottle with common spirits of wine, or strong gin or brandy; let it macerate till it is of tolerable strength; this is

ginger extract. Weigh the juice of the rhubarb, or measure it in a half-pint glass; to every pound of juice put a pound of loaf-sugar; let it boil till it is like a thick syrup, but very clear: if it be thick, strain it through coarse muslin or a sieve. Let the syrup boil, then have ready some pieces of fresh rhubarb a half-finger in length; when the syrup is boiling drop in the rhubarb piece by piece, let it boil till tender, then pour it into a large basin or dish, stir it occasionally till nearly cold, then stir in the ginger extract. Place the rhubarb in layers in jars or wide-mouthed bottles, putting layers of racemes of ginger between each layer of rhubarb, then tie it down securely, and when sending a portion to table be careful that the ginger is kept back."

"Bertha, how kind you are to enter into all these particulars! I shall ever look with respect upon rhubarb, which I have hitherto despised as being a mere substitute for fruit."

"That just comes from forming a prejudice against anything one doesn't understand. But come with me into the kitchen, or eleven o'clock will be here before I know where I am."

"But your time is your own—what does it signify an hour earlier or later?"

"My time is not my own, dear Milly, only certain portions of it. We have been one hour at breakfast, I cannot call that period my own; otherwise, if I did, I should be entitled to do anything I liked—read, work, or go out. No, this hour belongs to the breakfast-table; the next, from ten to eleven, to the kitchen; and the next I am with the housemaid settling the folds of curtains, or arranging the draperies of a toilet table, or doing the thousand and one things that a housemaid does not see are even necessary. Besides, my eyes in this time do more work than both my hands. At twelve I am in the dining-room to receive visitors; my time certainly is theirs. I am obliged to do this every day in the country. If I were in London and had many acquaintances, I certainly should only be at home to them once a week; but here it is different, our friends are not numerous, live a long way off, and generally manage to get here before two o'clock. Besides, they are all old friends—not acquaintances—of long standing; to play the fine lady to them would not do. When no visitors are here, my husband and myself, with poor Robert, walk or drive. The evenings, as you well know, are spent in home amusements. So that you see, dear Milly, the only time that I can really call mine is before breakfast, while my husband is out in the grounds among the labourers; and that is the leisure when I and Martin, the gardener, have long confabulations about my pets—the flowers;

when I write my letters, and perform other little matters pertaining to myself alone. Even when the girls are at home they do not intrude upon me; so that these quiet two hours before breakfast are really all my own."

"And when do you sew at the needlework of the house?"

"Needlework I put out, by my husband's desire. There are dependants upon his estate whom it is better to employ than to permit them to live on charity, for which (human nature is such) they would be unthankful. At the lodge there is an afflicted orphan girl, whose father was killed while blasting a portion of the rock yonder, which you see in the distance. The news of his death struck the nervous system of the mother, so that when this child was born it was deaf and dumb. My husband placed the child under the care of the lodge people. She has not grown up to be very intelligent, beyond being a most industrious worker. Now, not another word, Milly; Elizabeth's patience will be exhausted; besides, it's getting near the servants' dinner hour; so into the kitchen let us go at once."

In the kitchen I was surprised to find laid out on the table all the spare cold meat, a handsome piece of bacon, butter, eggs, and cheese, soup stock, with the cake of fat on the top; in another dish was all the material for making other soup; on one side the table on a chair the bread-pan was placed. I was very curious to know what all this was for, though I did not speak. Bertha took the baker's book in her hand, with pen and ink, obtained from a corner especially devoted to that article, and said—

"You have wiped out the pan, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She then felt the loaves remaining in the pan, then she put down the number of loaves that would be required till the next day. Rolls, fancy bread, brown bread, plain bread, each kind was mentioned. Then she looked into the flour-tub.

"This will be sufficient till to-morrow, so please put both bread and flour away."

Quickly Elizabeth vanished with these articles, and speedily returned.

"This cold beef with the vegetables re-warmed, and a plain rice pudding without eggs, you will take for the kitchen and nursery dinner." Then, turning to me, Bertha said, "Should you like your little ones to have this, Milly, or shall Elizabeth mince some of the meat?"

"No," I replied; "I should infinitely prefer them to have it cold with the gravy, so delicious as it is."

"You will get it punctually at one o'clock, if you please," said Bertha to the girl; "and about this soup, it looks clear and nice. I am glad you did not forget to strain it off last night, otherwise we should have gone without it to-day. And your soup-pot?"

"I have scalded it out, ma'am, it is quite sweet; and I thought this bone of mutton, with the trimmings of the cutlets, and a small piece from the end of this beef, which I forgot to cut off and salt, instead of roasting it, with some vegetables, will make a pint and half of soup."

"Yes, that will do very nicely; but don't put in any vegetables excepting carrots."

"Oh, I think vegetables in soup are so nice," I said.

"So they are, Milly, but they must be put in at a proper time, otherwise you have no flavour excepting a stale, disagreeable one. Boil the bones and meat for six or eight hours, then strain it, Elizabeth, as you have done here.

"Now then, Milly, this fat on the soup must be completely taken off. Mince somewhat small a couple of turnips, a tiny onion, a piece of shallot, and some outside pieces of celery. Let the stock boil, Elizabeth, twenty minutes before it is required for dinner, then throw in the minced vegetables and a tiny bit of butter; let the stock and vegetables boil rapidly for a quarter of an hour, and, if not sufficiently thick with the vegetables, mix a teaspoonful of flour smoothly with cold water and strain it in the soup, and let it simmer up once. Then strain it into the soup tureen, in which you will put the toast that was left from breakfast, but first cut it into tiny squares, and we shall have excellent vegetable soup. Will you recollect this, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"If cook were here I should not need to say all this, but Elizabeth is inexperienced."

CHAPTER V.

WASTE OF BREAD—HOW TO BE CHARITABLE WITH IT—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING NIGGARDLY AND ECONOMISING—SKILLED SERVANTS CANNOT BE HAD—A MISTRESS MUST TEACH THEM—HOW TO WASH SMALL THINGS IN A BOWL.

DURING my stay with Bertha I observed that she daily exercised the same careful supervision over every department of the cook's domain. The waste of bread, almost unavoidable in a large establishment like hers, was a source of trouble to her. Pieces that were left at table, outsides and dry crusts, the servants could not be induced to make into puddings, or to dispose of them in any way. Even beggars threw them aside; but still the waste was bread, and, as Bertha said, ought to feed somebody. "If we only had chickens," she remarked one day.

"You can give the crusts away to some one who keeps them."

"If I give them away they will not be valued. No, I must sell them," she replied.

"You would not be so mean, Bertha," my colour mounting to my face with indignation.

"Yes, I shall, and induce Betty Rudge, the old miser, to buy them. She keeps a number of fowls, and sells her eggs dearly enough. The waste here amounts to a large basketful in a week; besides, there are other scraps, of which no use is made, and I have always found that things which are of no value to oneself, if given away, are not cared for, but if a price be asked, if ever so small, the article is then coveted, and assumes an importance in the eyes of the buyer. So Betty must give me sixpence a week for the waste, and this afternoon we will hear what Betty has to say about it."

"But why trouble yourself about sixpence or even a shilling a week?—you do not need it."

"What you say is quite true, but I was bred up to have a wholesome regard for the maxim, 'Waste not,' and strangely enough, if I have ever done so, a time has come when I have needed what I have thrown away; therefore I have a kind of superstitious feeling about waste."

I pondered over all this, and for the first time in my life owned to a little contemptuous feeling for Bertha, which, however, I did not betray. In the afternoon we strolled to Betty's cottage, and,

without entering into all the conversation, I may as well say here that Betty agreed to give eggs in exchange for the waste bread—eggs to the fair value of sixpence a week.

We walked silently on from the cottage. Presently Bertha said, "You don't yet understand me, Milly; well, so it must be. I shall find pensioners enough for my sixpence, though I could not for the waste bread."

"But Betty does not even give you the sixpence; you have only eggs in exchange."

"You little goose, I must have bought these eggs; therefore if I have not a real silver sixpence I have its worth, and the sixpence is still mine to give." This argument was unanswerable. We continued our stroll without further reference to the subject beyond my asking Bertha why she did not keep fowls, her reply being that Robert seemed to dislike the noise they made, and yet could not be kept from watching them, which rendered him irritable; therefore they had been got rid of.

Presently we came to a pond, at the edge of which two children were lying, with their heads hanging over and their hands paddling in the water. Whether our appearance had frightened them, or some other cause led to the result, I could not tell, but the youngest toppled over, with its head deep in the weeds, and with its little feet sticking upwards against the somewhat steep bank. In one moment Bertha had flown to the rescue, the other child screaming with all its might, while she pulled the now almost insensible infant from the water. Fortunately, it was more frightened than really hurt; and after a few moments we ascertained from the elder child that they lived "down there," pointing to a lane, where, however, no house was visible, and that "mammy was gone out a washing," and that "father was dead." "But come with me to the house," said Bertha; "the child must have fresh clothes."

"But she haven't got any, and mammy tuk the key."

Here was a dilemma: the only house in sight was a respectable farm-house across the fields; the child's head and shoulders were covered with mud; the water had penetrated through all its garments, and it was wailing in the most piteous tone.

"There is no help left for it, Milly; we must go to the farm-house; I know the people there."

While saying this she had taken off her light cloth cloak, wrapped it round the babe (for it was but little other, only a wee toddling thing of perhaps sixteen months old), and, bearing it in her arms, we reached the comfortable homestead, the brother fol-

lowing us at a long distance as fast as his little legs would carry him.

"Why, whose child have 'ee got there, mem?" was the exclamation of the farmer's wife, when she saw us; and, taking the little frightened creature from Bertha's arms, a ray of intelligence shot through her face as she examined it, and saw the boy now just entering the door, calling "Mammy, mammy."

"Why, this be Sukey Steevens's child! Sukey, Sukey, come here!"

In obedience to this call, a slatternly woman made her appearance in great alarm at hearing the cry of her boy, who was clinging to her skirts. "Lard a mercy! what's the matter?" she asked; then, seeing the babe in such a plight in the hands of Mrs. Tucker, she turned round and cuffed the ears of the boy, savagely asking, "What's thee been doing to thy sister?"

At this the boy roared, the child began to cry, and the *mélée*, between the women's and children's voices, was likely to become unbearable, which Bertha suddenly stopped by saying to Sukey—

"Your children should not be left in this manner; it is a mercy one of them is not at the present moment dead. Your carelessness amounts to crime."

"It's all very well for gentlefolks to talk, but what's poor people to do?"

The muddy-face babe looked quite ludicrous; its tears had run down its face, leaving two white channels, so that even Bertha could scarcely refrain from smiling.

"There, Sukey, go and wash the child an' its clothes, and wrap it up in a blanket till 'tis dry; it'll surely catch its death of cold," said Mrs. Tucker.

Sukey took the hint and vanished, the boy going after her. During her absence we learned that the father had died of decline about two months since, and that Sukey, not having been a tidy careful wife, found difficulty in procuring bread for herself and little ones; indeed, her chief dependence was upon the farm where she was now working. "But," added Mrs. Tucker, "Sukey told me that a neighbour who kept a school for little children had the care of her children."

Here Sukey came back. "Why did you leave your children so carelessly?" asked Bertha.

"Please, mem, old Mrs. Jones wouldn't take care of 'em 'cause I couldn't leave the tuppence aforehand; so I gave 'em some bread and butter, and told 'em to play about—the plagues that they be!"

"How much did Mrs. Jones want for taking care of the children?"

"Please, mem, she'd take care of 'em both for sixpence a week; but when I only take 'em now and then she wants a penny apiece and the money down, and I never have got the coppers, for 'tis hard lines to feed three bellies upon nothing!"

"Does Mrs. Jones live far from here?"

"No, mem; in the next house beyonst our'n."

"How do you pay your rent?"

Mrs. Tucker replied that the cottage belonged to them, and Sukey had agreed to render two days' work weekly to clear the rent, and sometimes for a week or two together she had no other employ, though she always took home food enough to last her three or four days.

"Suppose I allow Mrs. Jones sixpence a week for taking care of your children, could you get other work?"

"I dare say I could, mem, for the children's a great hindrance."

"Well, then, I will see Mrs. Jones on our way back, and I hope to hear that you have got employment. You may be greatly thankful that the babe is living instead of drowned," were the parting words of Bertha, as we took our leave.

"My sixpence is very soon disposed of, Milly."

"But this sum is not much to you, Bertha, whether you had sold the waste bread or not."

"Not one single sixpence, perhaps; but how shall I have any to give away if I allow waste in my kitchen. I do not interfere with the cook's perquisites in this matter, as she could not dispose of the bread, neither would I suffer it if she could, for that would be offering a direct premium to waste, and it seems a mortal sin to me to throw bread away; so with odd crusts I have given comfort to four human beings, not to say five. First of all, Betty is pleased to exchange eggs for the bread, whereby she thinks herself a gainer; then Sukey must be well satisfied, knowing her children are in safety; and the two infants must be better off and happier, poor little things, under Mrs. Jones's care; and there is Mrs. Jones, who cannot but be gratified to add sixpence a week to her income; so five persons, you see, are the better off for our waste crusts."

The reasoning was unanswerable. We soon arrived at Mrs. Jones's, whom we found surrounded by a dozen children of all sizes, from a twelvemonth old to eight years. The old lady, who was exceedingly neat and pleasing looking, was making no attempt at teaching. She had a young niece with her who attended

chiefly to the young creatures, who were trampling about and playing without fear or care. Mrs. Jones appeared almost scared at our entrance; the children looked at us in mute astonishment, and grouped away together in threes and fours. Our business with the old lady was very soon settled, and she willingly undertook the care of the children when payment was ensured to her, though she asserted that Sukey Steevens did owe her "a power o' coppers."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW TO MAKE PUDDINGS—HOW TO SAVE IN MAKING THEM—TRIFLES DO NOT EXIST IN HOUSEKEEPING MANAGEMENT—A SERVANT'S ALLOWANCE—HOW TO EXPEND TWENTY-SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK—THE ORDERING OF SEWING-WORK—NO BUTTONS OFF SHIRTS—HOW TO WASH SMALL THINGS.

MY stay was not greatly prolonged with Bertha. I returned home, taking with me a strong healthy girl, about eighteen, to whom my children had been entrusted on my arrival at her house. My husband had spent the last ten days with us, so that we went back with renovated health and spirits, and with some considerable attainment of experience in household matters.

The night before we left I was sitting with Bertha alone; I remarked, "How different is my income to yours!"

"You forget how much more we have to accomplish with it. Yours is enough for all reasonable purposes; you cannot dress expensively, nor keep company, nor command the services of two domestics—which is no great luxury after all. A friend of mine has ten, and, not having a housekeeper to see to them, her life is perpetually worried with their contentions and bickerings. You can pass through life very happily if you will only try, but to do so pleasantly you must be able to assist yourself, and, above all, the economy of little things must be scrupulously adhered to. Nothing must be wasted. It would be quite impossible to give you rules for every or any course of action to be adopted—your own judgment must guide you. You are more skilled in domestic affairs than when you first married, but there is a wide room for improvement, little Milly. You must acquire a more competent knowledge of cooking than you have, so as to enable you to make the best use of everything. You must be your own housekeeper, as I am. You have seen me daily attend Elizabeth in the kitchen, who, without my assistance and direction, would be

as incapable of sending up a dinner properly cooked as the girl you take back with you. I have given out to her every day all the ingredients necessary for making puddings and pastry. If I had entrusted her to help herself to the sugar for the tarts, she would have wasted by putting in too much, and even an ounce too much of this alone would amount to twelve shillings a year; the same by butter, eggs, and milk, corn-flour, or arrowroot. You must learn the right proportions of every ingredient or material in cooking, or the waste will be prodigious and the money will insensibly melt away. When Elizabeth came first she told me she could make admirable corn-flour puddings.

“How much do you use?” I asked.

“One packet will make two puddings, ma’am.”

“I stared at the girl with astonishment.

“One packet will make eight good puddings; each pudding must have one egg and a pint and a half of milk,” said I.

“Why, that quantity would be lost in the saucepan!” she replied.

“Have no saucepan at all, then—using one is a wasteful way of making your pudding. Weigh the corn-flour, put it into the dish, grate into it a little nutmeg, and then mix it with a little cold milk, just as you would if you were making starch. Make a pint of milk boil, then pour it on the cold mixture, stir it up well, beat up one egg and two ounces of moist sugar with the remainder of the milk, then strain it to the pudding, mixing it well altogether, and bake it.”

“Elizabeth succeeded well after this, and at once sixpence was saved from waste. This fact alone will show you how waste is insensibly made. A manufacturer makes his experiments, and, if success crown his efforts, he endeavours to produce an article at the lowest possible cost consistent with excellence. The same principle should be carried out in the kitchen. Waste benefits no one, but, on the contrary, the servant or mistress is greatly demoralized by the habit of wasting; to such an one there is never enough. You must not mistake me, Milly; a half-pound of butter would not be deliberately thrown away; but I have known many servants waste more than an ounce at a time either by making melted butter badly, or through carelessness burning it, or by using too much. Sixpence a week in loss goes there—twenty-six shillings a year. Again, in the simple article of firewood, Bridget was a famous waster of that article; although in your neighbourhood it is rather an expensive item in housekeeping, one bundle was always heaped on to light one fire. My

aunt never allowed but one halfpenny bundle for three fires. I never heard the servants demur to this, and they never had more. You may smile, Milly, but it is in little things that money melts. You would look at sixpence twice before you threw it away, but this is constantly done in small matters—a kind of waste whereby incomes are silently diminished. You will learn this in time.”

“I shall learn many things in time, Bertha, but I shall never learn to be a niggard.”

“To be saving is not to be niggardly. If you come home weary and wet-footed, and will take no proper stimulant, nor have a fire to warm you, because of the expense, this is to be niggardly. If you will not allow your servants proper food, fire, and washing, on account of the expense, or prevent them from having a proper fire to cook by, or necessary materials to use, this is to be niggardly and wasteful at the same time. But to take care that they have sufficient for their use, *and no more*, to see that the fire is lowered after the cooking is over, that candles are not flared away, or gas lighted at improper times, that soap is not left soaking in the water, or cinders thrown away, or wood wastefully burned, is no niggardliness, but right and true economy, and by caring for which you do justice to yourself and act rightly towards your servants. It is all very well for people who have more income than they need to permit waste if it so pleases them, but it is not the less sinful towards their fellow-creatures. Their servants are influenced by their example, and, instead of carrying economy and sobriety as a dower to their husbands, bring them habits of wastefulness and intemperance. If in large establishments a good housekeeper is an invaluable treasure in the domestic department, how much more must such be in the person of a wife to a man with a small income!”

“How serious you are about trifles, Bertha!”

“There are no such things as trifles. ‘Trifles make the sum of human things;’ ‘minutes the hour, hours the day, and days the year.’ ‘Without the pence no pounds can be made.’ A trifle, if you will have it so, leads to death. The smallest theft makes the thief; a sudden blow, a murderer. Then what are trifles?”

Here we were interrupted by my husband, who wished to know if we intended sitting up all night. The next day found us at home, where everything at first seemed in confusion. Bridget was to stay a week to get the girl into the ways of the house; but, poor Bridget, she only got us all into a muddle. She had been her own mistress for some time, and all discipline and order had been forgotten. I was glad when she went. It

was days and weeks before I made any progress in housekeeping beyond my usual habits. Mary was a helpful girl. She at once asked me for her weekly allowance, a term I did not understand.

"My usual butter, and tea, and sugar, ma'am," was the reply in answer to my inquiring look.

"What have you been accustomed to have?" said I.

"A quarter of a pound of tea, half a pound of butter, and I have always had a shilling a week for beer money, but I've never spent it in beer."

"But you can use from that which I give out," said I.

"Sometimes you may think I do not make it go far enough, and I would rather you would give me my own if it made no difference to you, ma'am."

I considered the matter over, and found Mary was right; her suggestion brought me comfort. She had what she needed on a Monday morning, and I had no further trouble with her requirements all the week. As she had no access to my stores, I could not but be satisfied. I gave out each morning everything that was required for consumption during the day, and I saw that everything was in its place. It was labour to me at first, and most especially was it vexatious to be obliged to give up playing with my children to attend to this most essential duty; but the habit soon grew into a pleasure, for, no matter how I might be occupied, or where I might go, I had no fear but that the meals at home were right. Gradually I found that, by close attention to *trifles*, I was ultimately enabled to *appear* a very liberal housekeeper; indeed, "extravagant" was the gratuitous title I earned. By close attention to the trifles I once despised, I was enabled to make twenty-seven shillings a week go as far as I once could treble that amount. I had neither rent, taxes, clothes, nor servants' wages to pay out of the twenty-seven shillings a week, and I divided it into the following items:—

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Grocery | 3s. 6d. |
| Bread | 3s. 0d. |
| Meat and bacon | 10s. 0d. |
| Servant's requirements | 2s. 8d. |
| Beer | 2s. 4d. |
| Vegetables | 1s. 8d. |
| Coals and wood | 2s. 4d. |
| Lights and gas | 1s. 6d. |
| Total | £1 7s. 0d. |

I need not say that these different items left no margin for waste ; indeed, to purchase the needful requirements of wear and tear of furniture and house linen, and also to pay the washing bills, both myself and husband were obliged to give up a portion of the money originally set by for clothes. The children began to get expensive, and still their requirements had to be met. I learned the art of dressmaking from one who came to make up the children's dresses ; if I had not, I could not have managed to put out the work. Once in two or three years I got a silk dress, and that well made ; this was the extent of my extravagance.

In fact, I found the only way to manage was to make myself acquainted with every useful household art ; and amid all this call upon my time and energy, at every spare moment I assiduously practised my music, which was fast slipping through my fingers ; I also cultivated the talent I possessed for sketching. No motive short of educating my children, which, of course, I was obliged to do, would have enabled me to bear this extra strain upon my time and temper. I should say here that my husband's health, which had never been strong enough to follow his profession, gave way when my eldest child was six years old. He became afflicted with a spinal complaint, which laid him nearly prostrate for the space of eight years, and during this sad time all our available resources were needed.

The eight shillings a week resulting from the £20 per annum which we had reserved as a fund for emergencies was all expended in what was absolutely required to meet his case. The most skilful economy alone enabled me to keep out of debt. Had I been in the country it would have been altogether another thing, but in London all eatables were expensive, though London had an equivalent advantage in that we were not obliged to know any one. There was no one that we cared about to whom our servant could tell that we had only potatoes and bacon for dinner, or cold meat more than two days following ; though certainly the latter circumstance did not happen very often, for experience taught me that cold meat was a heartless meal, excepting now and then when a salad or fried potatoes made it, perhaps, more agreeable than a hot dinner. However, we lived unknown and unsought except by our kind friends the Grays, who too nearly resembled ourselves for them to be critical about our doings.

I educated my children myself, and in doing so found great delight. Each year my troubles seemed to grow less, for I became economical not only of money and money's worth, but of time also, as my husband needed the greatest care and attention.

We scrupulously kept up the insurance upon his life for the £500, though each year the payment was increased. As I mentioned before, I learned to do everything myself, so that I was, in a measure, independent of skill in a servant. I changed often—this was unavoidable; each went away “to better herself,” to be succeeded by incompetence and, too frequently, idleness.

The changes came so frequently (servants had altogether altered from those of Bridget’s days; they found it so dull, or they could not rise early, or always wanted to be running out) that I insensibly made up my mind that these miseries were fast becoming an established order of things, and resolved to bear them as unruffled as I could. Even Bertha Chapman complained that since the death of poor Robert things in her domestic *ménage* had altered. Two of her most trusted servants had married, and she could not replace them; several were tried, but were not equal to their duties. “There is no help for this,” she wrote, “but for mistresses to educate themselves so as to teach their helps.”

I had long ago found this out, and for so long as I had my health all went on well. But I felt pity always for every mother in delicate health, a prey to her servants in her uncomfortable home. There were comfort, and peace, and love in our dwelling, albeit the sickness of my beloved husband greatly overshadowed our joys.

My experience of the past has been, that had I set out in life with but a trifle of reliable practice in domestic matters, such as I afterwards taught myself, and with moderate aspiring as to any position which two hundred a year income would warrant, and that had I, or had we both, set out with sufficient moral courage to despise shams, and not have endeavoured to appear otherwise than we were—persons of very moderate income—we might have been spared much misery. Even had I been brought up to have known the prices of food before I entered upon marriage, we should not have made a false start in the world.

As to economy, if a rasping of bread or a cold potatoe can be made available, let it be used, not thrown away. To cook food nicely does not consist in the multitude or costliness of the ingredients used, but in the proper distribution of actual requisites, in the knowledge of the time necessary for the cooking, and in the temperature of the water or milk in which such food is to be cooked.*

* In the “Epicure,” which has been continued in almost every number of the Ladies’ Treasury since April, 1862, all these minutiae, upon which successful cooking depends, are given with scrupulous exactness.

An intimate acquaintance with needlework of every description is absolutely necessary to the mistress of a limited income—dress and frock making especially—which should either be learned as an art, or acquired from a dressmaker, who may be called in to assist. A work-basket is a fruitful source of misery; its contents have a habit of accumulating, and causing a depressing influence upon the temper and spirits.

What is to be done should be quickly done.

No garment with buttons or tapes off, or with rents or tatters, should be placed away in a drawer, but be mended the very first opportunity—now, if possible; it is a duty to be performed before pleasure. Stockings and socks should not be allowed to come into holes—thin places are easily mended. I hope I may not be considered dictatorial in thus insisting upon this very necessary observance, but I have suffered from procrastination in these very matters, and the obtaining of new articles of any kind was in my early days a matter of difficulty. The looking out the linen on Mondays was at first a worrying trouble to me, and I trusted this matter frequently to a servant, till the constant disputes with the laundress, and the loss of several articles, led me to perform this duty myself. Every Monday morning, as soon as breakfast was over, the servant brought the linen to the kitchen, where she sorted it over, in my presence, and I wrote it down, taking care to specify what kind the articles were—linen or calico. The clean things were then taken from the basket, every button and tape tried, and all put upon the clothes-horse to air, before putting them away in the drawers. It took something less than half an hour to do this. The remainder of the morning till one o'clock was spent in repairing all fractures and other needs. I never in my life mended dirty linen, no matter how much it was torn.

When my babes were young, after they had gone to bed I shook out and hung upon a clothes-horse all the garments they were to put on the next day, whether clean ones or otherwise, each little one's clothes by itself; and many a time have I washed out their little socks in the hand-basin in my own room, which saved much accumulation of these small affairs. My collars and cuffs I washed and ironed myself, and also many little matters of lace and muslin for the children. The process I adopted was a somewhat rapid one, and involved but slight labour. I threw a little borax into some cold water, and when the former was dissolved I put in over night the articles I designed to wash. The next morning I kneaded them well with my hands, wrung them out, and soaped them into tepid water, in which also was a little borax, not soda.

The dirt easily came out ; I rinsed them well in slightly blue water, in which some alum was dissolved to prevent accident from fire (as alum prevents flame), and partially dried them ; then made some *thin* starch, by mixing two teaspoonfuls or one of starch in two table-spoonfuls of cold water ; then poured boiling water upon it, stirring it all the time, till it was of the consistence of well-made arrowroot. While the starch was hot I put in the articles to be stiffened, and let them stay in for ten minutes, or even more, then wrung them as dry as I could in my hand, and then each article again in a clean cloth, thus preventing the starch from sticking to the iron, and rendering the lace or collars clear instead of muddy-looking. After squeezing them hard in the cloth, each article was shaken out, and laid separately in a cloth, and folded up tight, ready for ironing. It is astonishing how much expense I saved in my laundress's bills, by continuing often to wash some little thing, at a time when I appeared to be only washing my hands.

This little employment never made me the less fit to be seen ; in preparing for it, I did no more than pin a towel before me—a jug of hot water, and white curd soap (I never would destroy the colour and skin of my hands by using other kinds), and with a very little borax, I managed to have a great deal of comfort and clean trifles in clothes, without the machinery by which I obtained it being observed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ART OF DRESSING IN GOOD TASTE—ALICE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS—A HUSBAND AND FATHER'S DEATH—HIS INCOME DIES WITH HIM—THE VALUE OF AN INSURANCE—FUTURE EMPLOYMENT—ALICE AND EDWARD'S MARRIAGE.

THERE is one thing which I should mention as part of my acquired experiences—*the art of dressing in good taste*.

If I purchased an inexpensive material, I did not call attention to the fact by overloading it with trimming and paltry lace, but it was well shaped, and well made, and simply trimmed, so that by this means it escaped particular notice. I also avoided buying anything with otherwise than the most simple pattern on it. I had no desire to be known at any distance by my dress. The plainest, richest silk—generally black—was my best dress ; and the exquisite, fine, soft, silky black alpaca my home and evening dress. There is no pretension about the latter material—it is at once suitable and pleasing to the eye, and may be worn by a duchess without deteriorating from her acknowledged good

taste. The same by bonnets—of a good material, but so simple and plain, though always of the best shape, that they were generally becoming. I may observe that my style of dress, which from its excessive plainness disarmed criticism, was studiously acquired.

My frequent change of servants—from their own choice, not mine—led me to give up the contentious point respecting exuberance in their dress. So long as they were tidily clad while attending upon my family, I permitted them to “flaunt in gay attire” as much as they pleased when absent from me. For some time I mourned their folly and reasoned with them upon the bad tendency of their excessive vanity without making otherwise than an ill impression upon them, sulkiness being generally the result. However, they lost and I gained, for I became almost severe in the pattern and style of my own dress. An amplitude of fold, and a rich or otherwise most simple material, marked in dress the contrast between myself and my servants. To expatiate here on the folly of servants dressing so extravagantly is not to my present purpose, though I have often wished sumptuary laws were in force to compel them to attire themselves in a manner becoming to their station, or that their wages might be partially devoted to the savings banks, as a little future provision against sickness or other casualties.

My children grew up to be dutiful and loving. Alice, before her father’s death, became my right hand; she was an excellent little cook, a methodical housekeeper—in fact, a domestic treasure. I was determined that no self-made thorny path should be hers; hence she was carefully instructed in every petty detail of house-keeping, even to the salting of meat and the baking of bread; what she did at all was thoroughly done. This “*thorough-going-ness*” was part of her nature; she did not inherit the “*that’ll-do*” system, but shook it off with a determined effort, and kept it at a distance.

Alice was a pleasing reader; she also played with taste and expression, and she sketched from nature with a firm touch, which at one time led me to think might be turned to a professional account; this, on its being broached, she shrank from with undisguised aversion, but she nevertheless kept up the practice of all her acquirements with undiminished ardour, which led me to infer that she saw some necessity for it. Every summer’s morning found her at six o’clock reading and studying for an hour and a half; then she went into the garden and busied herself for an hour, coming in with glowing cheeks and the bright-

est of smiles. She was the ministering angel in our home. I had accustomed her from her earliest years to wait upon herself, and as much as possible upon her father and me also. The thought had never entered my brain to save her trouble ; therefore, year by year, she more and more filled my place in all domestic affairs. She learned to cut out and make all her clothes, and with an aptitude of contrivance quite foreign to my nature. I had perfect rest and peace as to her future, should she ever be left alone in the world ; not that I could presume she would be exempt from trouble, sickness, or privations, but I felt she would be prepared to meet them, and therefore would suffer less than if she were an ignorant untaught girl.

We were one day conversing upon the different degrees of happiness which women especially experienced, even when they set out from the same point in life. "I do not think it possible to be very unhappy," said she, "if we make the best of our means, whether they be little or great." "But suppose you don't know how to make the best of everything?" "Why, in that case there must be misery for the wife, the children, and the husband. I sometimes think I shall be 'somebody' some day, mamma ; and that is why I practise so much every accomplishment I know. I should not like directly I was married to give up my piano, my singing (ah ! that I cannot say much for at present ; but never mind, that will come), and my drawing, and so bury myself away, giving no joy to my bright little home which I am sure I shall one day have."

"But, Alice, darling, if papa should not live. Every day, my child, is one of fear with me. What is to be done then ? Papa has only the use of our income for his life." The child's face blanched with terror. She sat looking at me as one stricken with horror. At last the words came—

"What do you mean, mamma ? Papa has not been worse for some years, and how does he get the money, then ?"

"My child, your papa's brain has been gradually softening for now two years ; and Dr. Milward assured me the other day that the end could not be far off. 'One month of sad suffering you will see, and then—' was all he uttered ; and may God give me strength to pass through this, the worst of all my trials ! Alice, my sleep is disturbed, my attention always on the rack, listening for the incoherent sounds which probably will come from your dear father's lips before he is lost to us."

"Mamma, dear mamma, think not of this ; the end may be far distant."

"God grant it!" was all I could then say.

In one short month from this, though nothing had occurred to mark that approach which we all dreaded so much, I had left my husband apparently sweetly sleeping; the doctor came unexpectedly and watched him for some minutes; he then lifted his eyelids—the eye was rigid, though bright. Doctor Milward called for a lighted candle, and held it close to the eye; no movement took place; and in twelve hours from this time my husband was no more, my children were fatherless, and myself a widow. These are words soon spoken, but to realise them in their full extent is the concentrated bitterness of life.

My tale is drawing to a close. I had now no two hundred a year to manage—and how to manage with it was all I was requested to write about—but my readers who have gone so far with me will perhaps be interested in knowing something about our after life. Mrs. Gray came to us in our dark hour of sorrow, as did my parents also. With the latter we removed to my early home—alas! to me no home now. My boy had been one year articled to an old friend of his father's when our great trouble overshadowed us. Enough money was realised by the sale of our furniture to pay our good kind doctor, and with the five hundred pounds obtained from the insurance company an annuity was purchased for me. The house which for seventeen years I had but seldom seen since I married from it was not the home of my youth; my sisters and brothers filled it, and I felt myself an interloper. My income would not suffice for me to live alone with Alice, neither would Alice stay with my parents without me. My past experience had educated me for something better than idleness, and I wished to obtain some useful position, where some one at least might be helped through my knowledge so dearly obtained.

My sisters—three of them—were just no better than I had been when I married. My mother still toiled for them, still hoped to see them marry either men in their own position or above them. My remonstrances—nay, entreaties—to them to render themselves self-helpful were in vain; they had never experienced a care or thought for the future—a system of education too frequently adopted by parents, which leads not unfrequently to crime in married life—therefore my suggestions were treated as out of place, and my conduct as interfering and dominant. "Let them alone," my mother would say; "they will learn time enough."

How bitterly I felt her words! My dower, truly, had been

to learn the ways of life—but at what a cost! It was of no use contesting the matter, so I gave it up in despair. I sent an advertisement to the *Times* describing myself as a useful housekeeper. In due time it was answered by a lady who had the care of four orphan nieces. She herself was unmarried, but had been called upon suddenly to take possession of her deceased brother's household, he having been a widower only a year. Miss Arkwright had never kept house, and disliked all domestic ties; nevertheless by her brother's will she was left guardian to his children, with so much personal income as long as she resided in the house with them. For herself she was a kind of missionary lady, always begging money for some scheme which was to assist regenerating the heathen, while, alas! thousands of heathen existed within walking reach.

Miss Arkwright's letter explained all that she needed of me—to manage the servants, to see that the children were nicely kept and watched, and to have the house always comfortable of an evening when she arrived: her *duties* taking her from it the whole day.

My parents were exceedingly angry when they heard of my determination. Alice, with tearful eyes, implored me to renounce the idea of servitude, as she termed it; but to each and all I answered, "I can only forget my trouble in active exertion, in being obliged to think for others;" and so I was allowed to have my own way. To Alice I pointed out the advantages my income would give herself and brother.

"Not to myself, mamma, will there be any advantage; for Edward let your sacrifice be made."

"But, Alice, I cannot let you live here without paying for your board."

"Mamma, I intend to go into a school, where I may obtain lessons for my services."

"Have you counted the cost, Alice?" I asked. "Can you submit to the discipline—the monotonous duties of school routine?"

"Mamma, is this question asked with your usual judgment?" she reproachfully questioned. "You have all your lifetime been instilling into me that duty cannot be laid down at will unfulfilled, or put aside for a future time; and now, when the first real duty of life presents itself, do you think me a coward or incompetent, or what is it, mamma?"

"I think nothing of the kind, Alice. I merely think that, as you have the choice of work or play, it were as well to weigh

the consequences of each ; and whichever you prefer, it is my most earnest wish to see you happy in the choice you make."

"Mamma, as you have succeeded in obtaining a situation, will you kindly insert an advertisement for me?" was all the answer I obtained.

Thus our destinies were settled, we both dwelt in other homes, and from this time I can date my prosperity in life. Both Alice and I were fitted for our positions ; we gave full satisfaction each in our several employments, and received in return the most unbounded confidence and esteem. Alice, at twenty-six, married well ; an ample settlement was made upon her, subject only to fifty pounds a year being taken from it, and secured to me during my life. Edward about the same time entered into partnership with the gentleman with whom he had been so many years, and from that hour gave me a fixed yearly sum sufficient to have supported me, and which to this day nothing can induce him to re-assume, although he has married and a young family have their claims upon him. I am living with the youngest of the family of the Arkwrights ; all the rest are married ; the eldest married my boy. Miss Arkwright left me £100 a year—all her income ; and Dora, her youngest pet, declares that nothing shall induce her to leave her own "Minnie." She insists upon it that, as Ruth followed Naomi of old, so will she never leave, never forsake me.

She is but twenty—we shall see.

THE CONCLUSION.

WORK FOR EACH DAY IN THE WEEK, AND SOME SIMPLE DIRECTIONS FOR A FEW DAINTY DISHES OF FOOD.

I HAVE pondered over the pages which I have written, and certainly all my experiences are there set down. The only margin in the expenditure which could be allowed is in the article of insurance. The £25 yearly to be taken into the income, if a policy of insurance were not effected, would give something less than 10s. a week extra—less than eighteenpence a day. This sum, when one is bound to live so very economically, might be done without, to secure the advantages which would arise from it in after life. To make her own happiness, I would earnestly advise

every girl to educate herself for a domestic life as assiduously as she does to play and sing, and by no means, when she has attained the latter acquirements, to allow them to slip away out of her grasp for want of practice. From the moment a bride takes possession of her house her chief duties in life commence ; it is hers to form her machinery for action, to keep it in working gear, and to so ornament it by her own graces and accomplishments that the wheels and other motive power be hidden. A woman who means to play her part well, in ever so humble a home, must be a good manager, so that every duty shall have its allotted time—not one duty be huddled upon another. Be also a good financier, so as to make not only every penny do its work, but occasionally the work of twopence ; and be a good diplomatist, for concord, and comfort, and a pleasant life should be the result of her management.

During the progress of this article through the press it has been suggested to me to give definite rules for doing the work of a house each day. I could not see that this was possible, any more than I could give a mean calculation of how much cloth it would take to make boys' clothes in general, or how many bricks it would take to build a house of no definite size. Unless I knew the circumstances of each individual this would be useless. The week's work was thus divided and arranged in my own house :—

MONDAY.—Linen day and mending.

TUESDAY.—Washing and ironing ; kitchen and scullery scrubbing.

WEDNESDAY.—Scouring bright tins and dish covers.

THURSDAY.—Scrubbing out closets, cupboards, and larder and kitchens.

FRIDAY.—Pastry making ; passages and hall cleaning ; one sitting-room thoroughly.

SATURDAY.—The second sitting-room thoroughly ; a general scrubbing and thorough cleaning.

One bed-room was thoroughly cleaned on each day of the week,

and others slightly swept with a soft brush and duster every day. Stairs thoroughly swept twice a week, and slightly every day.

By these means the whole house was cleaned throughout every week. But without mistress and maid are early risers—the latter being down stairs at six o'clock and the mistress at seven—all this work cannot be accomplished; and one thing I would mention, that a servant should never be kept up after ten o'clock at night.

Of course I do not say that these I have enumerated were all the duties to be performed; but they are the chief in every house. On Sunday I had as little work done as it was possible. We dined at two o'clock. After three I suffered the servant to go out till eight o'clock. The tea I arranged myself, and I gave the girl, at every convenient time, as much holiday as I possibly could; not that I was served better by this arrangement, but, on the contrary, frequently worse; but then it was a duty I owed her, and, whether she were grateful or not, it would not take from my imperative duty towards each and all of my fellow-creatures, namely—

To do as I would be done by.

On the next three pages I give some simple Directions for the Preparation of a few Dishes which are not only very excellent, but the Ingredients are readily obtainable at a trifling cost.

DIRECTIONS.

I.

TO MAKE PEA SOUP.—A pint of split peas, well washed in hot water. Put them into an iron saucepan with two ounces of dripping and half a pint of cold water; let them simmer till the peas have swelled and *the water cannot be seen*; then add less than half a pint of cold water; continue doing this for an hour and a half, till the peas will mash readily with a spoon; then add as much water as may be needed and a little salt. When the peas *boil up again* throw in six *small* onions. Let it all boil together for half an hour; then pulp the whole with a wooden spoon through a colander, return the soup to the saucepan, mix smoothly a piled teaspoonful of flour with some cold water, add some soup, and strain it to that in the saucepan—let it simmer up once; then serve it with dry buttered toast cut into squares. For fourpence an excellent addition can thus be made to a dinner.

II.

AN EXCELLENT AND ECONOMICAL DISH.—Mix two tablespoonfuls of flour with a *little* cold water, burn some sugar in an iron spoon; over this, and on to the flour and water, pour enough boiling water to extract the colour of the sugar and *set* the flour. Take an ox kidney, costing 6d. or 7d., cut the hard core out of the centre without dividing the kidney; into this space put a large onion stuffed with six cloves, also a piece of butter or bacon fat the size of a walnut; pour the thickened mixture on the kidney, stew in an iron saucepan four hours, *but covered close*. To serve, take up the kidney; if the gravy be too thick, add a little water and a spoonful of ketchup, and strain it over the kidney. Serve with mashed potatoes. This will make a relishing dinner at little expense.

III.

A SUPPER DISH WITHOUT MEAT.—Peel and wash eight or ten *large* onions; throw them into a large saucepan full of boiling water

with two ounces of salt; let the onions boil one hour exactly; take them up with a wooden spoon on to a flat dish, put an inverted pie dish over, and drain the water away. Serve with cold butter and pepper, or potatoes baked in their skins; or the onions may be eaten with bread and butter only. This is, besides being digestible food, an excellent remedy for hoarseness or soreness in the chest.

IV.

CUSTARD TO EAT WITH COLD STEWED FRUIT.—A pint of milk, to which add two large eggs (yolks and whites), one ounce of sugar, and a little nutmeg; beat altogether in a basin *with a whisk* for five minutes or less, put it into a saucepan, and stir it over a clear fire till it thickens. Put into a jug half a teaspoonful of almond flavouring (sixpenny-worth will last for months, and the poisonous kind is not now sold), then *strain* the custard into the jug, then again strain it into another, and so keep on pouring it from one jug to the other till it is cold. This quantity will make twelve excellent custards, but it may be served in a glass dish with sweet cinnamon powdered over. This custard will cost fivepence.

V.

ARROWROOT CUSTARD.—Two ounces of arrowroot, two ounces of loaf sugar (or good moist), and a little grated nutmeg, to be well mixed with a little cold water, only sufficient to make it into a paste. Have ready a pint of boiling milk in which a small piece of lemon peel has been boiled; gradually mix this with the arrowroot, when it will form a thick custard; then strain it on to a few drops of almond flavouring and pour it backwards and forwards till it is cold. A dish of fruit or rhubarb made into jam and sweetened, with this custard poured hot on the top, and then allowed to cool, is very delicious, wholesome, and inexpensive.

VI.

BOILED FLOUR: A LIGHT SUPPER DISH.—Prepare a small calico bag a quarter of a yard square, let it be well sewed all round, stuff as much flour into it as it will hold, so that when stuffed is shall be hard as a stone; tie it up securely, put it into a saucepan of boiling water, and let it boil four hours, filling the saucepan up as the water boils away, then take it up, peel off the skin, chop or break the ball of flour into pieces, roll it with a rolling-pin on a pasteboard; then sift it, and, when

it is cold, put it into dry tins, such as tea or coffee or mustard tins. This is quite equal to maizena or Oswego corn flour, and may be made as arrowroot custard, only it must be boiled. This article is worthy of consideration in a family on account of its cheapness. Three and a half pounds can be made for the cost of one of maizena or Oswego; and seven pounds, for one of arrowroot at one shilling and fourpence per pound. It is strengthening and very delicious.

VII.

TO STEW MUSHROOMS.—Sprinkle some flour over the bottom of a saucepan, put in a piece of butter, some pepper and salt, and melt altogether; lay in the mushrooms, after peeling them, and stew for five minutes.

VIII.

Another way.—Butter a plate or old dish, arrange the mushrooms on with a little butter, pepper, and salt in each, cover them closely down, and bake in a hot oven for ten minutes.

IX.

Another way.—If the mushrooms are large, do not peel them, but wipe them dry; put some butter, pepper, and salt in each; fold them in buttered paper, so that they are entirely excluded from the air, and bake them on a hot oven-plate for five or six minutes.

THE END.



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